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SONGS OF OLD FRANCE

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BY
PERCY ALLEN

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FRANCIS GRIFFITHS
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1908

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DEDICATION

To

MADAME YVETTE GUILBERT

to whose perfect art they owe their inception,
I dedicate gratefully these songs of France.

952835

PREFACE

The following are some of the sources from which have been drawn the songs and poems appearing in this collection.

"The Répertoire of Madame Yvette Guilbert"; "Les Œuvres de Alain Chartier," by A. du Chesne Tourangeau, published 1617; "Poésies Complètes de Charles D'Orléans," by Charles D'Héricault; "Œuvres Complètes de François Villon," by Pierre Jannet; "Œuvres Françaises de Joachim du Bellay," by C. Marty Laveaux; "Poésies Choiesies de Pierre de Ronsard," by L. Becq de Fouquierès; "Œuvres Poétiques de André Chenier," by Eugène Manuel; "Chansons de Frédéric Bérat (paroles et musique)," with introduction by Eugène Guinot (this book out of print, and scarce even in Paris); "Chansons Populaires de l'Alsace," by J. B. Weckerlin; and also, by the same author, "Bergerettes, Romances et Chansons du XVIII^e Siècle," "Chansons Populaires des Provinces de France," "Chansons Populaires du Pays de France." There will also be found songs from "Chansons Populaires de l'Ain," by Charles Guillon; "Chansons du XV^e Siècle," by Gaston Paris, and from "La Lyre Française," by Gustave Masson.

In preparing the Introduction I have consulted, in addition to the above, the following works: "François Villon," by Gaston Paris ("Grands Ecrivains" series.)

"Familiar Studies in Men and Books," by R. L. Stevenson; and Mr. George Wyndham's *"Ronsard and The Pléiade."*

The few biographical notes forming the Appendix are taken mainly from the "Biographie Universelle."

The translations of the modern songs appear with the consent of their various authors and publishers, to whom I offer my very grateful thanks both for the authorizations and for the courtesy with which my requests have, in every case, been met. I regret that, up to the present time, I have been unable either to verify the name of the author of "La Morphinée" "The Morphia-Taker," or to discover the publisher of that song. Should these lines come to the notice of these gentlemen they will, I hope, pardon the inclusion of my translation in this little collection.

The following are the Authors and Publishers to whom I am indebted.

"Rosa La Rouge" (Rosa The Red), and "A La Villette" (At La Villette), by M. Aristide Bruant, published by the author at 10 Rue Christiani, Paris.

"La Glu" (The Limer), by M. Jean Richepin, published by M. Fasquelle, Bibliothèque Charpentier, 11 Rue de Grenelle, Paris.

"La Soularde" (The Drunkard), by M. Jules Jouy, published by M. A. Rouart, 18 Boulevard de Strasbourg, Paris.

"Idylle Normande" (A Norman Idyll), by Messieurs Marinier and Cas, published by La Société d' Editions Musicales, 7 Rue de la Pépinière, Paris.

"*Ma Tête*" (*My Head*), by M. Gaston Secretan, published by M. Enoch, 27 Boulevard des Italiens, Paris.

"*Pierrot Pochard*" (*Pierrot The Topper*), "*Pierrot Assassin*" (*Pierrot Assassin*), and "*Pierrot en Auto et Berline*" (*Pierrot in Motor and Berline*), by M. Jacques Rédelsperger, 8 Rue Berlioz, Paris.

In conclusion I wish to offer my sincere thanks to Madame Yvette Guilbert and to all others who have assisted me in the preparation of this book ; among whom I must particularly mention and thank my friends, M. Théophile Baumann and M. Gaston Lorette, whose help has been as valuable as it has been generous and unstinted.

P. A.



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SONGS OF OLD FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

The story of a beginning is often interesting, and in the hope that it may prove so in this instance, I open my preface with a few words concerning the origin of these songs.

Some three years ago, acting on the advice of a friend, I attended a recital given by a celebrated French "Diseuse" at a concert hall in the West end of London, where, having taken my seat early, I wiled away the interval between my arrival and the commencement of the performance by reading some of the old French songs which comprised the singer's *répertoire*. I possessed at that time a slight acquaintance with and some affection for the songs of France, but reading them there, with expectation awake in me and my appetite whetted for what was to come,—my friend had been eloquent in praise—I realized then only

for the first time the haunting human charm that pervades these lyrics, a charm peculiar to the nation of whose genius they are the expression—and there arose in me a keen desire to attempt the rendering of some of them into English verse. I was still brooding over the possibilities of the scheme when my reverie was interrupted by the entry of the singer who, attired in seventeenth century “Pompadour” costume, stepped jauntily forward to the footlights, and responding to the welcome of the audience with a smile clearly indicative of an “entente” between them and herself, announced the title of her first song, “Le Curé de Pomponne.”

Now merely to hear Madame Yvette Guilbert give out the title of her song, is something of a revelation to those unacquainted with her methods. Demeanour and voice convey an assurance that what you are about to hear will be worth the hearing; they compel an immediate attention, necessarily immediate because there is no preamble to a French “chanson.” It goes straight to the point, and losing only the first verse you may lose all. The audience, realizing that danger, listened, and came under the spell of the artist. During those two hours we forgot that there are other actresses

more favoured by nature in the matter of physical beauty, that there are other public singers gifted with voices of richer quality and of wider range of compass; we remembered only that in the personality of the singer the lyrical-dramatic genius of the French nation had found perfect expression. We were in the presence of a representative art. From the England of to-day Madame Yvette Guilbert transported us to the France of yesterday, a place of many delights. With her we walked in a little wood where Colinette, in quest of violets, encountered a wolf, a gallant and a warning; we overheard in a Breton village a dainty duologue between a maiden who found it easy to be a woman, and a man who found it hard to be a priest; we were summoned by blare of trumpet and roll of drum into a King's palace, there to witness a great renunciation and a tragedy of royal passion. Then we were shown an idyllic little love comedy, played by a boy and girl in a mean Parisian street, and thence we were born southward to hear all the bells of Nantes tolling a mysterious escape that we—and the gaoler's daughter—could have elucidated, if we would.

Such were the places we visited, such the persons whom we met. All were very human

and therefore very lovable; and everywhere among them we found laughter that was akin to tears, and tears that were akin to laughter. These are of the essence of French song.

Charmed with what I had heard and read, I went home with the songs in my pocket, and in my mind a full determination to attempt the rendering of some of them into English verse. I communicated that intention to certain of my friends, who were, on the whole, the reverse of encouraging. Indeed they were epigrammatic in disapproval. One told me that "nothing had ever gained by translation but a bishop"—as though I had hoped to improve upon the originals—another that "translations are the reverse side of the carpet," while a third suggested that "a translated song is a voice through a gramophone." Now these epigrams obviously enshrined a measure of truth. It was more than probable that I should but reverse the carpet and sing my songs through a gramophone; nevertheless I determined to do what I could, knowing that, at the worst, my task would afford me many hours of congenial employment, and that, in any event, I might succeed in giving legitimate pleasure to a certain number of readers. I hoped, too, to direct the attention of some to hitherto un-

known delights that are within the reach of all who will take the trouble to acquire something of that language,—for charm, flexibility, and expressiveness the first in Europe—a familiar knowledge of which will soon be looked upon as an essential item in the equipment of every educated Englishman.

The time is not long past since England was to France an unknown isle and France was, in the eyes of England, a land inhabited by a hostile race that lived on immorality and frogs. Increased intercommunication has only begun to dispel our respective illusions, to lessen the distance between us, but that distance is lessening daily, and as the two nations come to understand one another, French mistrust and British insular prejudice will disappear, and little by little we shall draw nearer to the realization of Tennyson's dream. The day of translations will be over long before that time comes, but should this handful of songs chance to help a reader, here and there, to a livelier sympathy with France, her people and literature, the translator will be well rewarded for his pains; and he tenders here to any who may become interested in the subject his advice that they take their earliest opportunity to forsake English renderings and to betake themselves to

the originals. With the object of extending the book's range of interest, and of enticing readers onward through the nameless poetry of the people to the beautiful works of the acknowledged poets of France, I have added to the more popular songs translations of a few of the poems that have pleased me most during my excursions into that rich literature. I need scarcely add that this collection is not to be regarded in any sense as an anthology. I have but plucked here and there a blossom upon the primrose path, and I would refer all those who would gather more of such to the "Flowers of France," the complete anthology of French poetry in English form that is now in course of production by that eminent translator, Mr. John Payne.

Let me now return to and endeavour to define some of the charms of the humble "chanson." The first of them all, that which lies hidden in the genius of the language, in the indissoluble unity of the music and assonance of the words with the meaning they convey, is, unfortunately, as far beyond the skill of the essayist to describe as it is beyond that of the translator to convey. Some of the other qualities, however, though often subtle and elusive, are yet to a certain extent definable and communicable,

though there must, of course, always remain difficulties—some of them insuperable—connected with the handling in one tongue of metres, rhymes, and refrains that were written in another. I am conscious of a measure of failure in my task, and it is perhaps needless for me to state that when, in the course of these few remarks, I shall have occasion to praise any of the songs, the reference will be to the originals only. I have endeavoured faithfully to reproduce what was there, but much has of necessity eluded me.

Some of the qualities of this popular poetry are very happily summed up by the eminent French "littérateur," M. Gaston Paris, in his interesting collection of 15th century songs, from which I quote this extract: "Many of these songs contain exquisite features of naïve grace, of delicate sentiment, of light and dainty poetry, and possess, above all, that indescribable charm, peculiar to the popular muse, that inimitable turn of thought, sentiment and reverie, which eludes analysis and sometimes eludes comprehension also, but which by its impressiveness deeply moves the heart and the imagination. Others shew us to the life with highly coloured crudity the manners and mode of thought of vanished times; they are the more interesting

as being drawn usually from the most disturbed classes of a community in those days so picturesque. Others show us the impression produced upon the nation by the great events of that time."

The above remarks, though written of the songs of one century only, may be said to apply with equal truth to the subject generally; but the reader will find for himself in the detail of the originals attractive qualities other than those spoken of by M. Paris. He will find, for instance, a keen and subtle sense of humour, truthful delineation of character, power of dramatic presentation, and such a sense of the significance and of the mystery of life as makes us fully realize the unity that exists between the naïve and natural art—"naked, sometimes dirty, but gay and smiling"—that rose from the hearts of the people, and the fully developed and majestic art that found expression in the poetry of loftier and more cultured minds.

There will be noticed also in the more dramatic chansons an economy of phrase and a precision of outline that result in great realism of effect. The lyrical and dramatic muses of France, working in collaboration, seem to know instinctively what detail will suffice to convey the right impression without robbing the reader

of the pleasure of drawing from his imagination enough to complete the picture sympathetically with his own temperament. Take, for example, "The Three Hussars," Is there another song in existence that gives you, in five short verses, so much of the characters and life histories of seven persons? Where else in literature will you find together, in the same compass, daintier comedy, grimmer tragedy, in cameo!

There is much humour, too, in these songs; humour sometimes genial and good-tempered, sometimes bitter and ironical, and sometimes coarse and indecent; for the nation that is held to be the gayest in Europe—though it is in fact, I think, less gay at heart than is usually supposed—must have its laugh. It has had it, sparing none. Almost every national foible that could be turned into ridicule has afforded a subject for the "chansonnier," and all, from the poorest in the land to the priest, prelates and princes, have come under the lash of his mocking refrains. If the greater have, during their lifetime, been handled more lightly than the lesser men, national prudence was the only cause of that clemency. Few examples of humorous songs, will, however, be found in this collection, for the reason that a nation's humour is so peculiarly its own as to render

the task of the translator unusually difficult. Sentiment and pathos are so little distinctive in character that they can be reproduced with comparative fidelity, but humour is not so amenable, and the best attempts to convey it in any other tongue result too often in dismal failure. Another difficulty arises in connection with the rendering into English of the refrain, which may have to be led up to, and rhymed to, through perhaps a dozen verses. The French nation possesses an extraordinary facility for accomplishing this, the task being rendered much more easy, and indeed only made possible, by the number of similar rhyme sounds that the language comprises. The impossibility of repeating the rhyme sequence in English has necessitated the omission of several very characteristic and extremely humorous songs that I wished to include, more especially one or two of those popular effusions that satirize, rather cruelly perhaps, but with much "verve" and humour, such vanities as those of the old lady of eighty "who thought she was fifteen."

Speaking of the refrain, I may perhaps mention here that from earliest times the French have realized the value of its musical and cumulative effect. To such an extent was this so during the 15th century that the literary

poets of the day, almost without exception, became the slaves of their facility, and ceased to write in any but set forms of triolets, rondel, or ballade. Popular poetry, however, happily escaped that bondage and remained natural.

Returning to the general aspect of the subject, the *chanson*'s greatest claim to our affection is found undoubtedly in its humanity, in which respect its nearest British equivalent is the poetry of Scotland. There is one particular aspect of that humanity, its feminine aspect, that will appeal perhaps as strongly as any other to the majority of English readers. These *chansons* are the spontaneous expression of the lyrical genius of the French people, and derive from their very nature a feminine quality. That nation so impulsive and mercurial, so swift and eager to feel and express an emotion, is, to our more stolid and virile temperament, instinct with feminine attractiveness. Ask any dozen average English men or women of the educated classes whether they feel a natural liking for the French nation, and, while several will answer broadly in the affirmative, there will be absolute unanimity upon one point. All will tell you; "We like the French women." Now we would not have it imagined that such an assertion would by implication constitute a

slight upon the men of that nationality. None of those who know anything of France and of the great qualities of her manhood, will presume to patronize it by their championing; nor, turning from the nation to the language, will they be disposed to contest the dictum of the enthusiast who declared that German was the language of horses, Italian that of angels, and French that of men. All this we concede; but there is no doubt that, to many Englishmen, and more especially to those who possess only a superficial acquaintance with the subject, the genius of the nation is, in its lighter and lyrical aspect, feminine; the French woman stands for France.

There is, I think, some basis for such an opinion. It is not merely that in many instances these songs have love for their central motive—that is true of much lyrical poetry that is not essentially feminine—but that the treatment is marked by so much that is characteristic of the sex; by daintiness, tenderness, coquetry, intuition, subtlety, dramatic sensibility, and a hundred other fascinating and elusive qualities that belong to the eternal woman and in particular to the eternal Française. Possessing this degree of femininity, these songs naturally find their perfect expression in a woman's

personality. Those who have heard some of them sung by Madame Yvette Guilbert will perhaps be disposed to agree with me.

Songs seem to come as spontaneously to the lips of a French woman when she is happy, as tears to her eyes when she is sad; and if she be gifted with any sympathy of voice, and her hearer with any sympathy of soul, the resultant pleasure is great. I well remember finding myself not very long ago in the same railway carriage with a young couple who were travelling from the "Gare Montparnasse" at Paris to a station beyond Versailles. The man was about thirty-five years of age, and was apparently of a serene and calm disposition; the woman was about ten years younger, not pretty, judged by our English standard of prettiness, but daintily dressed—"bien mise" as the French say,—and possessing that indefinable piquancy of appearance that is so characteristic of French women. In contrast with the man she was neither calm nor serene, but radiantly happy and overflowing with prose and poetry in the form of speech and song. The spoken words were whispered low and volubly to her companion, and between the quick, eager sentences, songs and snatches of songs, dainty, merry or mad, bubbled up continuously, and,

received by the man with a quiet smile, were punctuated by herself with kisses and applauded with laughter. She was at first somewhat shy in the presence of a stranger, preferring, as certain words indicated, to keep something in reserve until the darkness of a tunnel swallowed us up; but, gradually realizing that the stranger was harmless and engrossed in his journal, she gave herself up without restraint to her natural vocation as an exponent of the lyrical spirit of France, and sang to the journey's end.

I remember another occasion when, far away from Paris, I saw a winter's sun set golden red below upland pastures and witnessed there, though under very different circumstances, a similarly idyllic rendering of Gallic song: but that, in Mr. Kipling's phrase, is another story.

The first quality, then, of the French popular muse is humanity, and it carries with it a very natural defect of that quality, a tendency to pass over the truth that man is a soul and has a body, in favour of the untruth, or half truth, that man is a body and has a soul. Many of these French songs are, in a word, immoral. One has often heard it urged in their excuse that a nation chargeable with that offence has been endowed with a compensating faculty for the exercise known as "skating

lightly over thin ice," but one may doubt whether the fascinations of that feat justify its perils. This, however, is not a question with which we need greatly concern ourselves. One of my objects in writing these songs has been to turn readers to the sources whence they came; and, when all is said, those who really care for poetry, popular or otherwise, or who can be made to care for it, know that it can have as its ultimate aim only the expression of the ideal. All genuine poetry—and popular poetry is often more genuine than the cultured variety—does, if we think down into it, attest the nobility rather than the weakness of human nature. Good is always the positive, evil only its negative or shadow, as darkness is but the shadow of light, and those who approach the subject with an open mind will come to no harm whatever or wherever they may read.

Returning from this digression to the human aspect of these songs, I will relate, as told me by a friend, an experience illustrative of their humanizing effect upon certain minds and moods. I give this incident not only as having a direct bearing upon the immediate subject, but also in the hope that it may interest readers who have not visited Normandy, and may perhaps create in some a desire to make them-

selves acquainted with the fascinating northern province that has produced so much that is characteristically charming, both in Gothic architecture and in lyric art.

My friend was on a cycling tour through Normandy, and had put up for the night in a small though ancient town, at an hotel that in Renaissance times had been the "château" of a great lord. It is a delightful old building, retaining externally all the attractiveness that quaint gables and elaborate carving afford, and internally the charm of cunningly devised, mysterious passages that lead you, feeling for your sword hilt, under dark oak beams and through shadowy angles, into wide and unsuspected chambers, where, as you look from the dogs on the great hearth up to the heavy ceiling, and from the latticed windows and panelled walls to the tambour in the farthest corner, you realize yourself to be an anachronism, the growth of a morning; and all that is in you of sympathy and imagination plunges back into the past.

Almost directly opposite to this ancient Renaissance palace is a yet more ancient Gothic church from whose twin towers, raised in the thirteenth century, the eye can command the town and the avenue that follows the valley,

stretching westward towards the river. My friend had seen those towers shining far away in the setting sun as he dropped down, on a summer evening, from the northward hills. On arrival at the château he partook of a meal in a lofty panelled room that from its first days had been, as it is to-day, devoted to dining; and, after a stroll round the church, then flooded in summer moonlight, he retired to his room. Feeling somewhat exhausted by the day's journey under a hot sun, he lay down upon his bed from which he could see the summits of the church towers and obtain a glimpse of the hills behind them. While lying thus he fell into one of those eerie moods to which young men of dreamy or æsthetic temperament are occasionally subject, more particularly when they are, and have been, much alone. The world became—my friend told me—strangely unreal to him; he seemed to be passing through it as a phantom, a shadow among shades. The old sphinx riddle that has tormented us all in turn, began again to importune him for a solution. What was to be the issue of it all; what significance had it, this ancient palace, this village hidden among hills, this warm soft air, this summer moonlight upon Gothic towers? What were they, what was he, who felt

their power but was powerless to unlock their mystery? Though he was fully awake these questions pressed themselves upon him with the vague, imperious insistence of dream, until suddenly, above the questioning voices, there arose from the stillness of the village street the voice of a man singing beneath his window. It was a peasant's voice, harsh though not unmusical, and the song—my friend could follow the words—one of those clean cut character songs such as Bérat wrote, depicting, in comedy vein, an episode of village life. The song was given with keen dramatic instinct and had a refrain that was played upon with the apt change of expression that adds so much to the effect of naturalness. Song and singer were instinct with a simple human feeling that in a moment brought my friend's mind back to sympathy with a life with which it had for a while lost touch. The climax of the song was reached to an accompaniment of laughter; then came a last echo of the refrain, then a moment's silence, followed by a burst of applause, hand clapping and the stamping of heavy boots upon the stone setts. The listener upstairs dressed himself and, descending into the street, sat down at a small table under the eaves of the building on the outskirts of the group of

peasants who surrounded the singer. There he listened to song after song, and the moon was low behind the Gothic towers before he climbed once more the narrow winding staircase that led to his chamber; but the enquiring voices were hushed within him and he was at one with humanity again.

There is another and very interesting element of these songs that we have not touched upon as yet, that of mysticism and supernatural religious belief. It was very natural that the French people should be deeply interested in those mysterious aspects of life which, though far out of reach of their understandings, had yet the power to stir deeply the imagination and to yield them a sense of present security and of definite hope for the future that, in those troublous mediæval times, a prospect of their immediate surroundings could seldom afford. Finding little to satisfy in the existing order of things, they turned eagerly to the supernatural, and there filled their minds with the strangest legends, allegories and miracles that vivid and naïve imaginations could conjure up. There is, to me, something at once pathetic and beautiful in the beliefs recorded by songs such as those entitled "Charity," "A Dumb Girl," and "A Mystic Song"; pathetic because

of the crudity of form in which religious truth there presents itself, beautiful by reason of the earnest upward striving, and of the fierce hunger and thirst after righteousness, to which they given expression; and even though those crude ideas of an anthropomorphic deity fall far below the grander conceptions of a more enlightened belief, the people of that time showed nevertheless in those simple productions, a firm grasp of the central ethical truth that the order of the universe is moral, and that the ultimate triumph of good over evil is assured. We have long since abandoned the belief that the beggar at our gates may be God in disguise, and that God's mother may be seen walking through our cornfields on a summer's evening; yet I confess that to me these illusions are still very gracious, and such as I would cherish willingly if I could. On reading, for the first time, the original of that "Mystic Song," I wished that it were possible, now as then, for an English maiden to come face to face with "Sweet Jesus" in a country lane, and to feel her heart burn within her as He talked with her by the way.

The legend of the appearance of God, or of Jesus Christ, disguised as a beggar, was, says M. Weckerlin in his valuable collection of "Popular Songs of France," very widely cir-

culated throughout the country; and in this connection he recounts the following legend. Saint Yves,* the Breton saint, had distributed among the poor who were gathered in his house at Kermarten, a whole baking of loaves. One of those present was very dirty, disgusting and hideous to look upon. His body was scarcely covered with rags. Saint Yves bade this beggar sit with him at his own table and eat with him from the same plate. When the poor man had eaten a little he rose from the table and going to the door said in Breton, "Farewell, may the Lord be with you." Instantly the beggar was seen to be of surpassing beauty and clothed in a robe so luminous that all the house was lit by it.

Here I will tell, from the same book, another story of the weird religious imaginings that fill the minds of those Breton peasants. They believe that the soul rises to heaven in the form of a bird.

"One day," says M. Weckerlin, "while my eyes were following the flight of a lark as it rose singing through the air, an old labourer leaning on the fork of his plough, looked at me in silence. 'She sings gaily, doesn't she?

* The Cornish fishing town is named after this saint.

but I'll bet you don't understand her song.'

I admitted that it was so.

" 'Well,' said he, 'this is what she is singing: 'Saint Peter, open the gate; I will never sin any more, never any more, never any more.'

We waited for several moments; then the peasant said, 'We shall soon see whether they'll let her in.' As the bird dropped he cried out, 'No, she has sinned too much. See what a bad temper she is in; do you hear her, the wicked thing? Pec 'Hinn Pec 'Hinn Pec 'Hinn. I will sin, I will sin, I will sin!'

Piquant superstition! vague echo of ancient Druidism."

This volume contains another very striking example of the mystical stories that were so universal in the middle ages. I refer to the weird legend of "The White Roe." The very title is suggestive of its purport. A quaint German mystic—quoted by Mr. Pater in the chapter "White Nights" in "Marius the Epicurean"—speaks of so called white things as being ever a mystery, an afterthought—the double or seconds of real things, and themselves but half real, half material—the white queen, the white witch, the white mass. To these we may add the white roe. The origin

of this legend—found principally in Brittany and Normandy, and to this day often recited in France—seems to be the expression of a poetical and imaginative mind contemplating the mysterious dealings of Destiny with the children of men. A fate decreed must be worked out, and neither the victim's entreaties nor even a mother's love are of any avail against it. One finds in this strange poem a suggestion of the uncanny, magical atmosphere, of the immanence of powers of evil, that has won for Coleridge's "Christabel" a place alone in English poetry. I do not of course for one moment suggest that this crude legend is worthy of comparison with our English masterpiece, but I do feel that there is in it something of a similar magic, something of the same compelling appeal to the sympathy and imagination.

Often in my dreams I have wandered darkly through the leafy glades and moonlit wastes of that mysterious forest, to hear its midnight stillness broken by the scuffle of flying feet and the crisp sound of scattered leaves. Nearer and nearer the sounds come until there mingles with them another, the gasping sobs of a hunted animal, and then another like the baying of hounds. A white something, dimly de-

lined against the black boles of the beeches, sweeps past me. Deeper and louder swells the bay of the ravening pack until, a confused mass of moving sound, it plunges by, and, dying into the distance, is lost in woodland murmur as the first breeze of the morning stirs the leaves. Then I hear a horn sounded from afar; once, twice, thrice; then from the depths of the enchanted forest the same note again, followed by a wailing cry; then silence, the white roe is won.

Sometimes too, I wander into an ancient château on the forest borders, and there watch a bent weather-beaten old man, who, his arms bloody to the elbow, is flaying a white roe. I see him pause more than once in his task to stare with a quaint mingling of fear, bewilderment and amused curiosity at the thing before him. I see the wet red hand lifted to the grizzled head and hear him muttering, muttering, "But the roe has fair hair and the breasts of a maid!" I have been present, too, at the supper table whence the sister's spirit spoke from the dish, and I have seen Leon go forth cursing destiny and himself, "To have but one sister and her to have slain!"

But though the French popular muse usually expresses itself in a manner more or less simple

and unlettered, it sometimes takes an almost purely poetic turn that raises a song here and there to a high level of literary achievement. The best example in the present book of this purely lyrical inspiration that thus shows itself occasionally in the poetry of the people is, I think, the song entitled, "The Belle in the Garden of Love," the æsthetic charm of which, in the original, recalls to me the work of our Præ-Raphaelite school. It is written in a purely imaginative vein, with the exception of the last verse which is probably a later addition. M. Victor Smith says very truly that. "It belongs to an ideal world and is the expression of refined feeling; it has the appearance of a literary conception for the use of the cultured; one would say that it was taken from a book of the "précieuses," yet it is, nevertheless, in a certain degree popular."

I will now say something concerning the modern songs included in this book. They are for the most part written by Parisian authors, and are taken without exception from the répertoire of Mme. Yvette Guilbert. They deal so largely with the sad and seamy side of human life, that one cannot but feel that the modern muse would find some difficulty in successfully defending herself against a charge of decadence.

The work is for the most part permeated by the same hopelessness, the same tendency to seek inspiration in sorrow and evil, rather than in happiness and good, that one remarks in modern French sculpture—beautiful though much of that is—and it would indeed seem as though French art, both popular and æsthetic, were passing through a phase of despair, from which, let us hope, it will soon emerge. Yet these modern songs, gloomy though they are, possess the advantages of their defects. They are poetical, dramatic and intensely realistic, this last quality being especially true of the class of song recounting the deeds of the “Apaches,”* the ruffians who, prowling, like red men on the trail, round the fortifications of Paris, earn a precarious livelihood by their knives, their wits, and the sins and shames of the women whom they exploit.

“My Head,” a rendering of which will be found on page 186 is a grim example of this class of song, popular to-day in the cafés of Montmârtre.† That grimness will best be realized by those who have heard it given by Mme.

* Apaches, a tribe of American Indians.

† Montmârtre.—The Mount of the Martyr, Saint Denis—has, by a curious irony of circumstance, been accounted the holiest place in Paris, excepting the hill of Saint Gèneviève.

Guilbert. I myself have not heard "Ma Tête" sung in public; but when, a few weeks ago, Madame Guilbert was speaking to me on the subject, she gave, by way of illustration, the closing lines and the refrain of the last verse. In a flash I was made to see the bloody drama played out before me, and to realize both the potency of the modern chansonniers art, and the extraordinary tragic power of its foremost interpreter. In comedy Madame Guilbert is "exquise," in tragedy she is "effrayante."

These studies in realism and the "chansons rosses,"—humorous and satirical ditties, touching usually upon politics or topical events—are among the forms of song that find most favour in Paris to-day; but, in speaking of these modern songs, I must mention that my limited acquaintance with them calls for diffidence; and it may well be that a wider knowledge will cause me to modify, in the future, the opinions that I hold concerning them to-day.

I wish, in the concluding portion of my preface, to say a few words concerning some of the earlier authors whose names appear in this book, and I therefore leave here the popular songs of France. I part from them reluctantly, as from friends with whom one has spent

many and happy hours, feeling that, though I have spoken as well of them as I am able, I have not captured the thought or word that was most wanted. My hope is that some of my readers may find—if not here, perhaps in the originals—the dainty and elusive something that has escaped my pen.

Having opened my introduction with some remarks upon the popular poetry of France, I propose to conclude it with a very brief consideration of a few of her best known poets up to the middle of the sixteenth century. Let me lead up to that by a word or two upon the history of her early poetry.

The French have always been more ready even than other nations to utilise those gifts of poetry and song that "God in pity gave to mankind to lighten the burdens of humanity." They were a nation of singers from the early days, spoken of by Michelet, when the forests were spread so densely over the land that, in certain northern districts, a squirrel could pass over many leagues of boughs without coming to earth.

To go back, however, no further than the eleventh century, we have the famous *Chanson de Roland*, the songs of the *Troubadours*, and the poems of the northern *Trouvères*, which

were sung from end to end of the country by the Jongleurs, or wandering minstrels, to the accompaniment of the harp. The crusades, too, gave birth to many popular ditties, and in the fourteenth century we get the first of the hero songs and ballades on such incidents of court life as the weaknesses of a great noble, or the madness of King Charles VI., while hymns begin to make themselves heard in the mystery plays of the period.

About the middle of this century, the horrors of the black plague, then sweeping through France, were the origin of curious songs and of penances inflicted with a view to appeasing the divine wrath.* The entire living population of a village would leave their pestilence-stricken homes and go forth, they knew not whither, half naked, their breasts marked with a red cross. Lashing their bodies until the blood came, they would sing doggerel hymns, of one of which this is an approximate rendering.

Onward then, onward brothers all,
On our bodies let stripes be laid,
While we God's great anguish recall,
And the piteous debt He paid ;
Who into wicked hands did fall,
And wrongfully sold and betrayed,
Gave His virgin flesh to be beaten for all.
In that name fiercer stripes be laid.

* Popular Songs of France. M. Weckerlin.

Let us beat our breasts and faces,
Let us stretch out our arms willingly.
God who our cause yet embraces
And grants us the fields of the sky
And keeps all who in these places
Unto us in pity draw nigh.
Jesus too, as ever before.

Coming to the fifteenth century, we find the popular poetry of that period marked by an unaffected naturalness of sentiment that is found neither in the cruder productions of the preceding hundred years nor in the more developed works of later times. This is the more remarkable because during this century the literary muse of France—with the one notable exception of François Villon, of whom I shall say more later on—had abandoned nature and simplicity in favour of “the art and science of rhetoric” and had wandered away, as M. Gaston Paris puts it, “to wearisome allegory and heavy imitation of the latin.”

The poet and prosaist who so dominated the first half of the fifteenth century as to win for himself the posthumous title of “The Father of French Eloquence,” was Alain Chartier. Born in Normandy in 1386, during the reign of Charles V., he became Secretary to Kings Charles VI. and Charles VII., dying in 1458. He was the uncontested master of that style

of French poetry which consisted in a blend of the lyrical and didactic, and was the first to introduce the octo-syllabic stanza of eight lines that was adopted by François Villon in his "Testaments" and followed by nearly all the poets of the century.

Yet, although the name of Alain Chartier is well known to the majority of English readers, it is a remarkable fact that his fame owes less to the intrinsic merit of his work—great though that undoubtedly is—than to the well known incident that I repeat here in the quaint phraseology of an early seventeenth century volume, "The Works of Master Alain Chartier" by one André Tourangeau. Referring to the title of "Father of French Eloquence" quoted above; "These," says our author, "are praises truly high and rare for men of his time, though nevertheless but a small thing in view of a favour that was bestowed upon him even during his life. Monsieur le Dauphin, Louys, son of King Charles VII., had married the princess of Scotland, by name of Margaret Stuart. This princess, quite perfect in beauties of both soul and body, favoured the finer spirits of her day. And even as Master Alain Chartier was at that time esteemed one of the first at Court, she also judged him to be so rare a being that

she honoured him with a singular favour. For, passing through a hall where he was sleeping upon a bench, she kissed him; then, to satisfy the astonishment of the lords and ladies who attended her, added, that she kissed, 'not the person, but the mouth whence had proceeded such beautiful discourses.' "

We need not doubt that the astonished lords and ladies accepted the royal explanation; but whether M. Tourangeau—evidently of a romantic turn of mind—was right in appraising the title "Father of French Eloquence" as but a small thing compared with Margaret's "singular favour," is a question that readers must answer for themselves; though I, for my part, incline to the belief that he would have chosen that his fame should float down the centuries upon the breath of his own eloquence rather than upon that of a princess's caress. Destiny, however, willed otherwise; and so it has come about that English maidens, gazing upon our academy walls, read there, for the first time, the poet's musical name, and, perhaps, in their soft and secret hearts, envy the privileges of royalty. Alain Chartier, like the hero of "Sartor Resartus," was made immortal by a kiss.

In addition to the above romantic episode

England owes to this poet one of the gems of our literature, "*La Belle Dame sans Merci*," by John Keats, who borrowed both title and idea from a poem by Alain Chartier.

I turn now to another poet of the Court. Readers of Shakespeare's *King Henry V.* will remember the scene in the French camp at Agincourt where, on the night before the battle (October, 1415), the Dauphin and other lords cap each other's epigrams while they long for the morning. The Dauphin is eloquent in admiration of his horse.

"*Dauphin*: I once writ a sonnet in his praise and began thus, 'Wonder of Nature.'

"*Orleans*: I have heard a sonnet begin so to one's mistress."

The second speaker was Charles, Duke of Orleans, whose fame as an expert rhymers had doubtless reached Shakespeare's ears.

The longed for morning came, and with it the battle. Before evening closed in Charles was a prisoner of King Henry, who, shewing him all the consideration due to so important a captive, brought him to England, where he lay for more than a quarter of a century in durance vile at the Tower of London, Windsor, and other castles; years of captivity that enabled him, as Mr. Stevenson puts it in his picturesque

essay,* “to confirm himself as an habitual maker of verses.” Charles had been a rhymer from the beginning. The son of Louis de Valois, Duke of Orleans and brother of the mad King Charles VI. (whose secretary was Alain Chartier), the prisoner of Agincourt had been brought up in courts where his father had given a welcome to all poets, and had gathered about him the best that the times could give. Eustace Deschamps and Christine de Pisan, the best authors of the day, were Louis de Valois’ personal friends; and young Charles would have met them, and must have mingled there with the lords and ladies, ballad mongers, fools and fiddlers who, jesting, rhyming and rioting together made up the court life of that day. Few princes have had fairer fortune in early life. In the year 1400, when he was nine years old, he had been made a squire; three years later Charles VI. had made him a pension of £12,000 a year, and at fifteen he had been married to Isabella, the seventeen year old virgin widow of our Richard II. who—poor little princess—wept bitterly at being given to a boy. “Pleuroit fort ladite Isabeau” as Des Ursins puts it. In 1407 Louis of Orleans was murdered by his rival John the Fearless,

* Familiar Studies in Men and Books. R. L. Stevenson.

Duke of Burgundy, and young Charles took his father's place. Eight years more brought Agincourt and the long imprisonment. When, at last, questions of policy rendered it expedient that a new element of disorder should be given to France, Charles was free to return to his court at Blois and to take up again, as well as a man of forty might, the life of easy pleasure that he had quitted at twenty-three.

Meanwhile, as we have already hinted, the royal prisoner had not been altogether idle, unless, indeed, his verses may be so characterized. Many more were to come, but already ballades, triolets and rondeaus were filling the blank pages of a book which, though of the very lightest texture, is among the most pleasing that French poetry can shew, and is, of its kind, unmatched by any other writer of the period. Charles handled those three set forms of verse with a dainty grace and delicacy that delight and fascinate. Having almost nothing at all to say, he yet succeeds in so captivating your ear and sympathy that you follow him willingly through his two volumes of melodious trifling. The rhymes, returning again and again, ring like fairy bells so musically upon the ear that you must listen on from song to song, and come at last to await

eagerly each tinkling note, each lightest echo of the refrain. There is very little thought in these poems, little intensity of feeling, little of anything that is definite or real; only just an endless chain of gentle regrets and moonlit melancholies, such as come floating in music through the idle dreams of a poet. He apostrophizes his mistress without conveying the impression that she was more to him than an abstraction; he calls on melancholy to leave him, and would be the first to recall her were she to obey; he caps rhymes with the Duke of Burgundy; he is severe on January, pleasant with May, dainty and pleasing with all. Only occasionally does he make one believe that he is in earnest; once or twice when he makes his moan to old age, who comes to rob him of his youthful pleasure, and again when, a royal captive, he stands upon the cliffs at Dover, and looking out over the rolling water, sighs his soul toward the coast of France.

Well, he came home at last, and received with acclamation, re-established in great style and splendour his court at Blois, where, keeping open house to all whose position or accomplishments made them welcome, he wiled away with politics, history, religion, and rhyming the last twenty-five years of his life.

Many wandering minstrels must at that time have been attracted to Blois, and would no doubt have received the welcome due to those who, even in an age when everyone rhymed, could best appreciate their host's art, while they charmed him with their own. It is to one of these visitors that I wish now to draw the reader's attention. I can give no portrait of him, but imagine him to be a spare man with "a lean and hungry look"—like Cassius—and, on the upper lip, an ugly scar, that he had carried for some years past as the result of a little affair with a priest, one summer's evening by the porch of Saint Benoit at Paris. This stranger will stay awhile at Blois with the rest of the company, turning ballads, one of which—a bad one—is still in existence. But trouble, connected perhaps with the sudden coming to light of certain dark passages in the wanderer's past career, is brewing between him and his host, and prison gates are about to open and close before he finally goes his way. His departure leaves us speculating as to whether the Duke had realized that the fame of the stranger within his gates would outshine his own, and pass down the centuries at once a glorious and inglorious name. The man with the hungry face and scarred lip was he who bore

“ Our sad bad glad mad brother’s name,”

the strangest, saddest figure in poetical history, and the prince of all ballad makers, François Villon.

The limits of this book prevent me from dealing at any length with the life and work of this the greatest poet of mediæval France. I must content myself with a few remarks. Born at Paris in 1431 of poor parents, François de Montcorbier or—to use the surname which he afterwards took in gratitude to his adopted father, Maître Guillaume Villon, chaplain of the church of Saint-Benoit—François Villon, after what was probably a half-starved childhood, passed mainly in the streets, attended the schools of the Sorbonne, the University of Paris, where, possessing no money and a natural bent towards ballade writing and an easy life, he soon became the boon companion of a set of sharpers, coin clippers, and thieves, whose earnings went but one way,

“ All to the taverns and the girls.”

Those early days sealed Villon’s destiny, and, henceforth, the little we know of him is a record of crime, punishment, and misery. For murdering his assailant in the affair of Saint-Benoit above mentioned, he is banished from the kingdom and lost sight of, to be

found living on bread and water in the grim prison of Meun until the accession of Louis XI to the throne of France restores him to liberty. He returns to a life of crime in Paris, where he is imprisoned in the Châtelet, and is no sooner released than he is again arrested, and, with several of his companions, condemned to death. The latter duly feed the ravens at Montfaucon, but our poet appeals successfully against his sentence, which is reduced to banishment. He fires off a lively ballad to a turnkey in the prison, another, grotesquely grateful, to the Parliament that has set him free; then, his thumb at his nose and sorrow gnawing at his vitals, quits his beloved Paris for ever. All further trace of him is lost. We do not know where he died, nor when, and as to how we can only conjecture. François in his own pathetic epitaph declares that love slew him, Théophile Gautier says hunger. Probability favours the latter opinion.

Villon, meanwhile, had made himself immortal. Out of the dunghill had blown the rose, out of Paris slime the poet. Scattered here and there among the bitter jests and still more bitter complaints of his "Testament," just as they had come to him in the transitory though passionate emotions of his vagabond

life, there shine from that strange setting, the most perfect ballades that any literature has produced. This gaol-bird, swindler, house-breaker, and murderer; this vagrant scholar who passed his time in the company of thieves and clippers of coin, who—when he had the wherewithal—drank away his days brawling in the taverns of the “quartier,” to creep home to a supper of ducks stolen from Paris moat, and to spend any surplus cash in the brothel of fat Margot; this scoundrel among scoundrels was the first poet of mediæval France. Nothing stranger, nothing sadder has been recorded in all the records of human contradiction. Looking upon such a life, one scarcely knows what to think of it all, what judgment to pronounce; and, even when due allowance has been made for the morals and manners of the time, one cannot be surprised that there are many who, thinking of the man, find it hard to sympathize with the poet.

Nevertheless the appeal of Villon to our sympathy is very strong. The rascal possesses, among others, those most redeeming qualities, humanity and humour. There rings through all his poetry the cry of a suffering heart; he laughs through tears. We can also claim

for him more definite virtues. He loved his mother and wrote for her one of his most moving ballads, "As a prayer to Our Lady." He loved God's mother too, speaking of her with naïve piety as the only fortress to which he could fly from the many distresses that pursued him ; and always, even among the sordid shames of fat Margot, he hears the reproachful voice of a living conscience,

"We desert honour ; it deserts us."

Villon was too moral at heart ever to be happy in vice. The good mood and the evil, the sigh and the jest followed quickly one upon another, but both were genuine. His was one of those wild, graceful, and deeply emotional natures, such as Shakespeare has shown us in Richard II., though in Villon's character there is an added zest for humour and a certain element of Gothic barbarity that is lacking in Shakespeare's creation. The Frenchman's senses and emotions are always calling imperiously for satisfaction,

"No treasure like life at one's ease."

All material things that, by satisfying those senses, can, as he thinks, set his mind free best to feel and give out its impressions, he must have, by legitimate means or illegitimate,

now, while the passing mood is on him. He must make haste. Life is short, death is near, there is no time either for drudgery, or for dulness. Such was his temperament and from such moods were evolved his character and destiny. Strange that those very faults won him his undying name; for, paradoxical though it may appear, who can doubt that had he trodden the path of duty and prospered thereon, the world, though it had been the richer by an honest man, would have been the poorer by a great poet. Villon, become wealthy and wise, would, as a writer, assuredly have fallen back into the ranks of his verbose and pompous contemporaries. Fate, mindful perhaps of posterity's pleasure, intended otherwise. The poet must sin and suffer, because only through sin and suffering can his genius find full vent and his protesting cry be heard, as it is to-day, down the centuries. Has not the world, in one sense, gained thereby more than it has lost? for, as Gautier points out, great poets are rarer than honest men, even though the latter be by no means abundant.

Turning from the man to his work, we see that the poetry of François Villon was contemporaneous with and representative of the last phase of Gothic art in France. Already the gentler spirit of the Renaissance was be-

ginning to exercise a softening influence over poetry and architecture. The builders of the day, while adhering to Gothic forms, were lightening them with those rich yet delicate traceries and carvings that were the glory of the flamboyant style, of which so magnificent examples may be seen to-day at Louviers, Caudebec, and a hundred other French churches. The art of Villon, equally with the architecture of his day, expressed the spirit of the time, a softened Gothic. As Pater points out in his masterly essay on Joachim du Bellay, the higher touch in Villon's songs—the spirit of French Renaissance—makes itself felt here and there; “betraying itself, like nobler blood in a lower stock, by a fine line or gesture of expression, the turn of a wrist, the taper of a finger.” Nevertheless the spirit of his poetry seems to be mainly Gothic. I find in his grotesque humours the literary counterpart of the gargoyles of Cluny and Notre-Dame, and in his deeper moods something of the mystical Christian spirit that, piling up those massive towers and lifting those soaring arches everywhere over the fields of France, gave to us, in our Gothic cathedrals, the most sublime material creations that have yet risen beneath the hand of man.

That wonderful architecture was passing as the necessity for it passed. The Archdeacon, in Victor Hugo's romance, standing before Notre-Dame, looks from the book in his hand up to the great façade of the cathedral and realizes that "this shall slay that." The change was natural and inevitable. Henceforth the noblest strivings of the spirit of man were to express themselves, not in perishable stone, but in imperishable words—and William Shakespeare lay sleeping in the womb of time.

Villon was somewhat Gothic too in his indifference to natural beauty.* Wandering at night through the narrow streets of Paris, he seems never to have looked up at the glimpses of the moon seen through the overhanging gables; nor when, a banished man, he left the beloved city for the white winding road, does he seem to have found in rural beauty any pleasure that would mitigate his sorrow. In the heart of the poet of human life, the hidden poets of the air awake no answering song, nor has he eyes for the golden sunlight over leafy lanes, nor for the glint of silver fleeces floating across the blue. Not such the gold and silver that would procure him the delights of fat Margot,

* Early Gothic art was not indifferent to nature, but in Villons time it had become so.

or despatch mine host of the "Pomme de Pin," smiling, down to his cellars.

A softer spirit, then, a delicacy that was in part indigenous in the nation, and in part acquired by some subtle process of contagion, from the air of Italy, came to temper, in stone and song, the harshness of Gothic form, and ultimately to substitute for the northern a southern art. A finer feeling for natural beauty and a power to express that feeling with delicate finesse began slowly to develope in the sensitive minds of the time. The Renaissance came. In the year 1529 a young nobleman, Pierre de Ronsard, returning to Paris from Poitiers, met in an inn a young gentleman of Anjou, Joachim du Bellay, also bound for that city. An immediate friendship, based upon a mutual affection for the muse, sprang up between them, and that meeting was the foundation of the school of poetry known as the Pléiade, the constellation of seven stars. The songs of the Pléiade, several examples of which will be found in this book, though almost insignificant in respect of their matter, are yet in their manner unexcelled in French literature. They are perfect examples of form. In their best and most characteristic moods the poets of the Pléiade sing, in the lightest and daintiest aerial vein, a cycle of

ephemeral fancies. They bemoan the rigours of winter, and flirt with the delights of April; they sigh over the cruelties of their mistresses, fair and frank Marguerite, Marie mignonne, and Cassandra with the wavy golden hair. They lead you into the shining fields of Touraine, where, under the mid-day sun, the winnowers of corn invoke the light aid of the summer breezes; they beckon you into woodland glades, there to hear the wind whispering to the leaves, and the plash and ripple of the stream winding, through soft green shades, to the fountain Bellerie, round whose flowery banks the nymphs dance under the moon. All is diaphanous, delicate, daintily classical, and almost wholly unreal. Like their predecessor by two hundred years, Charles D'Orléans, they see the realities of life but as an ornamental background, a setting for the little flower-carpeted stage from which they can sing their songs. So long as the verse please ear and eye, what else matters? Music and melodious form are the only things about which they are in earnest, the only things real to them.

They love diminutives, all that is diminutively, decoratively beautiful. They think of the meadows as all chequered and diapered with flowers in patterns such as those with which the

sculptors of the time loved to enrich every pilaster and freize, with an art so akin to the poet's that I never stand before a Renaissance carving but I seem to see the tender fingers of Rémy Belleau guiding the mason's hand. They love too, to repeat the flower's names; violet, pansy, carnation, pink, and to twine the blossoms everywhere, again just as the sculptors did, in wreath, garland and festoon; roses in their mistress's loosened hair, roses around the limbs of every woodland nymph.

The rose of the gods is the scent,
The honour of every maid
Who loves rather in rare raiment
Of red roses to go arrayed
Than in golden ornament.

Roses and roses around
The limbs of the nymph we see,
In Hebe's hands the rose found,
And white though the love gods be,
Their brows are with roses bound.*

Such were "the sweet influences of the Pléiade." Trivial and insignificant as much of their song may seem to those readers who believe, and rightly believe, in a higher mission and function of poetry, we must yet remember that France owes to those renaissance poets much of the glory of her later literature, and that England,

* To Rémy Belleau: fourth book of Odes, by Pierre de Ronsard.

perhaps, owes to the influence of Pierre de Ronsard and his companions something of the metrical and musical inspiration that, matched with his native genius, has raised Algernon Charles Swinburne to so lonely an eminence among the singers of to-day.

Here I must leave these brief sketches of some of the great ones of mediæval song.

Strangely enchanting, are the mental pictures that, as I repeat them, their musical names up-call; but the question whether the matchless romantic charm of those two centuries lies wholly in the period itself, or whether it be in part an illusion, some chance atmospheric phenomenon, as of a great light seen across airy spaces, is one that I must not now stay to consider. I do but know that I turn from that purple past, as I turn from a gorgeous sunset, with a sigh for the day that is dead.

15th CENTURY

SONGS OF OLD FRANCE

RONDEL

ALAIN CHARTIER

1386—1458 (?)

Thanks be to God, I live always
Whatever sorrows be my share,
Good will doth succour yet dull care.
But I have passed my brightest days
Without the aid that grief allays:
Gently the bygone years I bear,
Thanks be to God.

With me no more Love's fancy plays,
Henceforth those weary moans I spare:
I leave it all, turn otherwhere,
For as for me, run is my race,
Thanks be to God.

BALLADE

CHARLES D'ORLÉANS

1391—1465

Go away, go ; away, away,
Trouble, care and melancholy,
Think you, all my life, over me
To lord it as you do to-day?
Nay : over you in sooth I say
Reason shall gain the mastery.
Go away, go ; away, away,
Trouble, care and melancholy.

If e'er again you come this way
With those your hateful company ;
I pray that God may curse for me
You all and your returning day.
Go away, go ; away, away,
Trouble, care and melancholy.

TRIOLETS

CHARLES D'ORLÉANS

1391—1465

Leave me to ponder at my ease,
Alas! grant me the leisure:
My fancies are such sweet pleasure,
That speech no more doth please.

When Melancholy's pale disease
Assails me out of measure,
Leave me to ponder at my ease,
Alas! grant me the leisure.

And when, my spirit to appease,
I summon memory's treasure,
That so soon doth bring me pleasure;
May this, for God's sake, not displease,
Leave me to ponder at my ease.

TRIOLETS

CHARLES D'ORLÉANS

1391—1465

God! how good it is to see her,
Gracious, wise and fair,
For the graces all that free her
Praises everywhere.

Who of her could weary be? her
Beauty doth not wear:
God! how good it is to see her,
Gracious, wise and fair.

Not this side nor that the sea, her
Equal, dame nor damsel there
Gifted is with grace so rare.
Dreamy sweet our hearts agree her.
God! how good it is to see her.

LAY, OR RATHER RONDEL

FRANÇOIS VILLON

1461

Death, from thy too rigorous part
I appeal, who tore from my side
My mistress and, unsatisfied,
Dost hold me here, by potent art,
To languish until strength depart.
What hurt did she thee ere she died,
Death?

Two we were, and with but one heart.
If that be dead, would I had died
Rather, sooth, than living abide
As an image is, dead at heart,
Death!

LAY

FRANÇOIS VILLON

1461

Returned from the cruel prison,*
Bereft almost of life ; if still
Fortune towards me bear ill will,
Be you judge of her misprision !
For to me it seems that, in reason,
She should ere now have fed her fill.
Returned.

For this is full of unreason,
So to work the backslider ill :
May the ravished soul, by God's will,
Be there, on high, in due season,
Returned.

* The prison of Meun-sur-Loire. Villon was arrested and confined there in the spring of 1461 for some unknown crime. The general amnesty granted to prisoners on the accession of Louis XI. to the throne of France, set him free in the following October.

RONDEL

FRANÇOIS VILLON

The graces that crown you Queen,
Have so wrought in the heart of me,
That I, though I die, must be
Your love more than all have been.

Yet I blame them not, for seen
Whom have they not held in fee,
The graces that crown you Queen.

And though come scorn between
You whom I love and me,
Whom shall we blame for it, we ?
Not me ; whom then ? I ween
The graces that crown you Queen.

RONDEL

FRANÇOIS VILLON

Once, only once, say Yes,
On the faith of a noble dame,
And I swear, by the sacred flame,
Never soul was blest as you bless.

Oh deign then to speak ; never wrong
Came from one so gentle and sweet ;
Nor is the sweet word over-long
To harm the rose lips ere they meet.

And of this be sure ; if you bless
This loyal and fearful soul,
He shall cherish holy and whole
Your honour. Speak, have you heard ?
Once, only once, say Yes.

HIS EPITAPH

FRANÇOIS VILLON

Here sleeping lies beneath the ground
One Love's shaft worked his will on ;
A poor young scholar stricken found,
His name was François Villon.
Without land to feed his fill on,
He gave his all, 'tis known around,
Stool, basket, bread, poor villain.
To God for him these verses sound.*

* Here follows the Rondel. See next page

RONDEL

Repose eternal grant to him,
Light, vision everlasting,
Who often wandered fasting,
Whose food o'ertopped no platter's brim.
Shorn, beard and brow, by fortune's whim,
As a root that's peeled for tasting :
Repose eternal grant to him.

To far exile a rigour grim
Drove him, weary footsteps hasting,*
His plaintive " I appeal " wasting—
No subtle word his need to dim.
Repose eternal grant to him.

* On the 5th June, 1455, Villon killed a priest, Philip Sernoise, by whom he had been wounded during a quarrel in the Rue St. Jacques. He fled from Paris and was banished after having been " called " in vain.

BALLADE*

*That Villon made at his mother's request as a prayer
to Our Lady.*

Lady of Heaven and Regent of Earth,
Dread Empress of marshes infernal,
Receive me your Christian of humblest worth,
An elect to your comforts eternal,
Though I merit no pleasures supernal.
Lady, my mistress, the graces of you—
Much greater than I am a sinner—can do
What, lacking, no soul may merit, surely,
Nor enter heaven, I speak what is true.
In this faith I would live and would die.

Oh say to your Son that I am all his ;
That my sins to his mercy be given :
Forgive me as Egypt's† woman, I wis,
Clerk Theophilus,‡ too, was forgiven ;
Who by you was absolved and shriven,
Although a pact he made with the Devil.
Preserve me that I keep from such evil ;
And, Virgin, I pray you not to deny
The sacrament, mass's holy revel.
In this faith I would live and would die.

A poor and an ancient woman am I,
Knowing nothing ; no letters I have read ;
At the parish convent I see, hard by,
Paradise with harps and lutes there painted,
And a hell where they boil the damned.
One brings fear, the other joyfulness ;
May this joy be mine, you high Goddess
To whom sinners all for succour must fly.
Grant me faith without feint or idleness.
In this faith I would live and would die.

ENVOI

You bore to us, Virgin, worthy princess,
Jesus whose reign is for ever, endless.
The All-Powerful bearing our weakness,
To aid us came down from heaven on high ;
Offered to death his sweet youthfulness ;
Our Lord is such ; such Him I confess.
In this faith I would live and would die.

* This translation does not follow the strict rhyming scheme of the ballad, which allows three rhymes only.

† Saint Mary Magdalene.

‡ See "Miracle de Théophile," by Gautier de Coinsi.

BALLADE*

The Contradiction of Franc-Gontier

FRANCOIS VILLON

On a down soft cushion a canon fat
By the fire in matted chamber lying :
At his side a lady on furry mat,
White, tender, dainty, dreamfully sighing ;
Day through and night through, the wine is vying
With laughter, love word, kisses and teasing,
And closer for senses fuller easing,
I saw them—through keyhole, on bended knees—
And knew that for sorrow's full appeasing
There's no treasure like life at one's ease.

If Franc-Gontier and fair Helen his friend
Had but always so sweet a life haunted,
Those onions that strength to the breathing lend
Above brown toast they would not have vaunted ;
Nor cheese, not even the potful wanted,
Were worth a wing, and the truth one knows is—
Praise as they may their couch under the roses—
That a bed and chair are better than these.
What say you ? Here the discussion closes !
There's no treasure like life at one's ease.

Coarse brown bread, barley and oats they live on,
Water only they drink the whole year long,
All the birds from here unto Babylon :
Not one day, so meagre thanks for my song
Would hold me, no not for a morning long.
Let Franc-Gontier frolic, who thinks it fine,
With his Helen beneath the eglantine ;
Since it pleases them, let me think as I please ;
But, whoever to labour may incline,
There's no treasure like life at one's ease.

ENVOI

Judge then, Prince, and we all are accorded,
But as for me—so that none it displease—
Little child, I have heard it recorded,
There's no treasure like life at one's ease.

* See note 1 to the preceding poem.

SONG

15th Century

True God of Love my comfort be,
Who hast to great distress brought me
For the fair one I may not see
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

Careless of what might chance, I rose,
And came into our garden close,
To pluck a rosebud or a rose,
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

I come into our garden fair,
Three Love-flowers find I there,
One I take and two I spare
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

I therewith a chaplet knit,
Three ways it escapes my wit ;
The fourth way I finish it
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

Three ways it escapes my wit,
The fourth way I finish it ;
So my lady's brow 'twill fit
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

So my lady's brow 'twill fit,
Well I know I'll win for it
From her a kiss exquisite
In this flowering season :
Alas ! how shall I pass away
This long lingering month of May ?

16th CENTURY



VILLANELLE*

(The winnowers of corn invoke the winds)

JOACHIM DU BELLAY

1524—1560

To you troop fleeting,
Whose light wings beating
Through the world stray,
And with softest murmur
The shadowy verdure
Tenderly sway.

I offer these violets,
These lilies and flowerets,
These roses to you,
These little red roses
The morning uncloses,
And these pinks too.

Fan with your sweet breath
All the plain beneath,
Fan all this retreat;
While I toil here below
At the corn I winnow
In the noonday heat.

* This famous song, one of the best known poems of the Pléiade, is in imitation of elegiacs by the Venetian poet Naugerius.

ON THE INCONSTANCY OF THINGS

(To the Seigneur Pierre de Ronsard)

JOACHIM DU BELLAY

Until death, none on earth
Happy are from their birth;
Inconstant fate bends
Now upwards, before
Decline, then once more
To heaven ascends.

The night dark and chill,
With shadows doth fill
The earth and the skies;
Honey-sweet on all,
The heavens let fall
Sleep sealing our eyes.

Then the day shining
To toil inclining,
His light doth expose,
And in hues diverse,
The great universe
All glistening shows.

When winter trembling,
Waters assembling,
Of the strong east winds
That mourn and that moan,
Of ice bright like stone,
The fury unbinds :

The earth then is seen
Her garment of green
To doff, sad and nude ;
The winds furious
Whirling about us
The forests denude.

Then the season gay
Renews, if it may,
Earth's verdure of old,
That all unsecure
Alas ! must endure
Again the same cold.

Thus then in their turn
Depart and return
The day and the night :
For the same reason,
Every season
Fast follows in flight.

The age of the child,
So wanton, so wild,
Resembles the spring :
Soon summer is here,
Then autumn is near,
Then winter trembling.

Oh ! little durable,
Thought unendurable,
Is our human day,
That oft from the sight
Of a morning's light
Is ravished away.

VILLANELLE

To Marguerite

JOACHIM DU BELLAY

The delicious month goes by,
When love's all enkindling heat
Bids us each with other vie
The day's sweetness to repeat;
But a rigour all unmeet
Brings the tears into mine eye;
Fair and frank Marguerite,
For you this agony.

Within your gracious eye
All sorrows have their seat,
In bitterness there meet;
Beneath a blossom sweet
Often the snake doth lie;
Fair and frank Marguerite,
For you this agony.

But now that old age draws nigh,
And profitless is life's sheet,
Despairing of better, I

To a hermit's life retreat;
To a hermit's life retreat
For a fuller ease to cry;
Fair and frank Marguerite,
For you this agony.

But if God's favouring eye
To the woods would guide your feet,
Where, despairing better, I
To a hermit's life retreat:
Pursuit, perchance, my sweet,
Would change that cheek and eye;
Fair and frank Marguerite,
For you this agony.

ROSES

*To Rémy Belleau**

PIERRE DE RONSARD

1524—1586

With these roses this wine let us blend,
Pour into this wine these roses,
Let each to the other drink, my friend,
That all griefs the heart encloses,
In the draught may meet their end.

The beautiful rose of Spring,
Joy's train to be found among,
All men is admonishing,
And to sport, while yet we are young,
With our days of flowering.

For ev'n as a blossom shed,
Down falls with the morning ray,
So is our age withered,
Alas! and in less than a day
The springtime of man is dead.

None flee him whom life begot ;
Charon stows all in his net,
There kings and the poor are shot :
But the hours are passing yet,
Rose, and I sing of thee not.

Ev'ry garden's pride the rose is,
The rose of their flowers most fair
And queen of them all is, I wis ;
That is why her name I declare,
The violet of Cypris.†

The rose is of love the bouquet,
The rose is the plaything of girls,
The rose doth blanch in the ray
Of the morning with tiny pearls,
Borrowed from break of day.

The rose of the gods is the scent,
The honour of every maid,
Who loves rather in rare raiment
Of red roses to go arrayed,
Than in golden ornament.

Without hers is no beauty, none ;
The rose maketh fairer all things,
Love's queen is the rosy one,
And the dawn hath rosy wings,
And rosy the rising sun.

Roses and roses around
The breasts of the nymphs we see ;
In Hebe's hands the rose found,
And white though the love gods be,
Their brows are with roses bound.

May my brows too with them be crowned,
My laurel my triumph's desert,
Let all roses lovers be found,
And here let us toast them, girt
With a hundred roses round.

* Rémy Belleau was one of the most graceful writers of the group of seven poets known as "The Pléiade."

† Cypris, one of the names of Aphrodite or Venus, derived from the island of Cyprus, which was the earliest seat of her worship.

TO CASSANDRA*

PIERRE DE RONSARD

Mignonne, come see if the rose
That this morning did uncloze
Her purple robe to the sun,
Hath not ere this evening lost
Of those purple petals most,
And the tint with your tint one.

See, alas! in how short space,
Mignonne, she has o'er this place
Strewn her faded beauties all!
A Stepmother truly, Nature,
Since such a flower may endure
But from morn until evenfall.

Oh then, believe me, Mignonne,
While yet your years flower on
In the freshest greens of noon,
Gather, ah! gather your youth:
As with this flower, age, in sooth,
Will wither that beauty soon.

* Cassandra was a beautiful girl whom Ronsard, then 20 years old, met and fell in love with, on an April morning, near Blois.

SONG

GILLES DURANT

I roam these shores and meadows,
These hills and woodland shadows,
But none find I who will tell
Of her I seek despairingly ;
Who, alas ! has torn from me
The nymph I love so well ?

Shepherdess, sight rejoicing,
Whose parted lips are voicing
Sweetest songs thy heart that swell ;
By all charms love yields o'er thee,
Tell me who has torn from me
The nymph I love so well.

Ah ! tis done, with her all's done ;
A god saw that lovely one,
Lured her to some dark dell ;
And stung by amorous jealousy,
Up to heaven tore from me
The nymph I love so well.

Farewell, forests desolate,
Mountains, valleys, loved of late,
Farewell, a last farewell :
Living I no more will be,
Since is torn away from me
The nymph I love so well.

APRIL

RÉMY BELLEAU

1528—1573

April the pride of green ways
And glad days,
Fair April the darling hope
Of all fruits new born that swell
In the bell
Of their downy envelope.

April the pride of the wold
Green and gold,
With a fanciful display
Of thousand coloured flowers
In showers
Dapples the chequered array.

April the pride of soft sighs
That arise
And, 'neath the wind of her wing,
Are setting in forest bare
The sweet snare
For fair Flora's ravishing.

April 'tis thy kind behest
From the breast
Of nature sets free the rare
Rich harvest of sweet perfumes,
And of blooms,
To the fragrant earth and air.

April thy glory growing
And glowing,
The golden head embowers
Of my love, her breast fills full,
Beautiful
With thousand thousand flowers.

April the grace and the wile
Of Love's smile,
Her scent and her fragrant breath,
April perfume that doth rise
Through blue skies
To the gods, from plains beneath.

'Tis thy soft call that awhile
From exile
Those wandering birds doth bring,
The swallows that wing from afar,
And that are
The messengers of sweet spring.

The hawthorn, the eglantine,
The woodbine,
The pink, the lily and rose
Now in this lovely weather,
Together,
Their new mantles all uncloze.

The dainty brown nightingale
In the vale
Pours forth, from leafy shades,
A thousand bubbling trills,
And fulfils
With melody all the glades.

'Tis love at thy glad return,
That must yearn,
With her warm sweet breath to win
Life for the flickering flame
Winter came
To stifle our veins within.

These young days bring to our sight
The fair flight
Of pillagers winged that rise,
Flitting from bloom to bloom,
For perfume
That they hide in their little thighs.

May her own freshness may praise,
Fruitful days,
And the quickening dew she gave ;
Sugar, for manna to eat,
Honey sweet,
That her morning graces lave.

But I, I raise all my voice
In the choice
Of the month that bears her* name,
Who forth from the light sea-foam
To this home,
Our mother eternal, came.

* Aphrodite (born of the sea-foam) French—Avril.

STANZAS

JEAN DESMARETS

1590

Ah God ! how cruel the flame is
Of this love that is burning me !
For false unto me my dame is
Whose lover I ever must be.

The oceans are more unchanging,
Or the march of the orbs on high,
Than the Protean fancies ranging
Through my lady's heart and eye.

No sooner alone in her grace,
Loves fires are lit—and for ever—
Than, another taking my place,
She feigns to have looked on me never.

The new-comer, proud of aspect,
Dreams a changeless eternity,
Till he, in a moment shipwrecked,
Sees, so happy in harbour, me.

I have done all that nature, art,
Or a lover's wit may contrive,
To hold that so mercurial heart ;
Yet, as ever, in vain I strive.

Weary, the sting of my despair
Is that though all her wiles I see,
My spirit turns not elsewhere,
But adores her in spite of me.

If jealous I turn from her door,
Deeply vowed to go not again,
My feet bear me thither once more,
Though to turn aside I am fain.

Accord ; then a slight to forgive ;
Oh ! of all men most wretched am I ;
With her I know not how to live,
And without her, only can die.

A SPIRITUAL SONG

ANONYMOUS

1569

Already the veil of night
Little by little is drawn,
The stars wane out and the dawn
Ushers in her golden light.

Uplifted, my heart, delight
In singing before the face
Of the Lord who by His grace
Governs the times in their flight.

Lord! who both now and alway
Dost bid the sun's matchless ray
On good and on evil shine,

Our spirits illuminate,
Till Thou lead'st them, consecrate,
To that heavenly palace of Thine.



17th AND 18th CENTURIES



ALCESTE'S SONG*

MOLIÈRE

Though fair Paris unto me
By her King were given,
So I must for ever be
From my lady riven.

To King Henry I'd reply ;
" You were still my debtor :
Take your Paris back, for I
Love my Lady better."

* See Molière's comedy "Le Misanthrope," Act 1, Scene 2.
Earlier versions of the song are known.

THE YOUNG CAPTIVE*

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

1792

The growing ear ripens unharmed of the scythe ;
Without fear of the wine press the summer vine
blithe

Drinks deep of the morning's smile ;
And I, fair as the ear and as youthful as he,
Though to-day bear its burden of dark misery,
I would not die yet for a while.

Let a stoic dry-eyed seek the kisses of death ;
I must weep, I must hope, to the northerly breath
I must bend ere I raise mine eyes ;
Bitter days though there be, there are some, Oh
so sweet !

What honey, alas ! may be daily our meat ?
What sea where the storms never rise ?

The so lovely illusion is with me again,
The walls of my prison weigh upon me in vain ;
With hope am I winged evermore.

Escaped from the snares of the fowler am I,
More eager, more happy, to the fields of the sky,
Still singing doth Philomel soar.

Is it mine then to die, unalarmed I sleep,
Unalarmed I wake, and awake ever keep,
As in dreams, remorse from his prey.
And my welcome to day laughs aloud in all eyes,
And, to faces o'erclouded, my face when I rise,
Brings almost a joy to their day.

My long journey so fair is yet far from its end.
I set forth, of the elms by the ways I must wend,
I am passing only the first.
At the banquet of life that is scarcely begun,
My lips but for a moment, and only for one,
Were pressed to the bowl, and I thirst.

I am only at spring, I the harvest would see ;
And as, season to season, the sun over me,
I live out my year if I may.
Glowing bright on my stalk and the garden's
delight
The young morning rays only have shone on my
sight ;
I would live out the last of my day.

Thou canst wait then, Oh Death ! fly away far
from here ;

Bring thy comfort to hearts on whom shame, on
whom fear

Yet feed, and despair doth beguile.

For me Palest† yet has some sheltering bowers ;
The pleasures of earth, and the song-laden hours :
I would not die yet for a while.

Thus, though captive and sad, my lyre once again
Awoke ; listening to the plaintive strain,

To the vows of a young captive ;
And shaking the yoke of my languorous days,
To the sweet laws of song I fashioned the lays
Of her lips so lovely and naïve.

A prisoner's musical witness this song
Shall be to the lover whose leisure may long

For that beauty, unsatisfied :

On her lips, on her brow all graces appear ;
They will fear, as she fears, that their hour
draweth near,

Whose days shall be passed by her side.

* The young captive was Aimée de Coigny, Duchesse de Fleury, who had been sent by the revolutionary government to the Conciergerie where Chénier also was imprisoned. Chénier was guillotined within a few days of writing this poem. On the day following occurred the fall of Robespierre and the end of the terror.

† Pales, the Roman Goddess of shepherds and pasturage.

ROSE-BUD

MDLLE. C. DE THÉIS (*afterwards Princesse de Salm-Dyck.*)

1788

Rose-bud, thine is the happier part,
For I destine thee for my Rose,
And my Rose is, even as thou art,
A rose-bud, Rose.

Upon her breast in warm repose,
Rose-bud, thou soon wilt lie ;
Ah ! were I too a bud that blows
Of pleasure I would die,
On the breast, on the breast of Rose.

Upon the breast of Rose thou mayest
Place with a rival share :
Beware, rose-bud, what then thou sayest,
For nought on earth is there
Like the breast, like the breast of Rose.

Good-bye, little rose-bud, good-bye ;
My Rose is coming, I see.
If there be changes ere all close,
Dear God ! for pity make of me
A rose-bud for my Rose.

THE SAILOR'S RETURN

When the sailor from war returns
Quite quietly ;
Shoes agape and garments torn ;
“Sailor whence com'st thou travel worn,
So quietly ? ”

“Hostess, back from the wars I fling,
Quite quietly ;
Bid them a bowl of red wine bring,
That sailor man may drink and sing
Quite quietly.”

The sailor bold began to drink,
Quite quietly ;
Began to sing and to drink deep ;
The hostess fair began to weep
Quite quietly.

“Now what doth ail you Hostess fair,
Quite quietly ?
Do you regret your red wine there,
The sailor drinks, singing an air
Quite quietly ? ”

“Tis not my wine that I regret,
Quite quietly ;
For a husband lost my lids are wet,
You are so like him, Sir—and yet,
Quite quietly.”

“Come now, answer me, hostess fair ;
Quite quietly.
Children four unto him you bare,
Children six are slumbering there
Quite quietly !”

“One morning news of him I read,
Quite quietly,
Saying he was dead and buried.
Long years had passed again I wed
Quite quietly.”

The sailor bold drained dry his glass
Quite quietly,
Drained dry his glass, tears falling fast ;
Quietly into the night he passed,
Quite quietly.

THE FATHER OF TRALEE

To confess myself, away I ran
To the father of Tralee.
That once I chanced to kiss a man,
Is the worst sin down to me.

Ah ! that reminds me,
Larila,
Of the father of Tralee.

That once I gave a man a kiss
Is the worst sin down to me.
Daughter, a deed so much amiss,
In Rome atoned must be.

Ah ! that reminds me,
Larila,
Of the father of Tralee.

Daughter, a deed so much amiss,
In Rome atoned must be.
Now, holy father, tell me this :
Shall I take the man with me ?

Ah ! that reminds me,
Larila,
Of the father of Tralee.

Now, holy father, tell me this :
Shall I take the man with me ?
Ah ! you've a taste for lightness, Miss :
Through you I can clearly see.

Ah ! that reminds me,

Larila,

Of the father of Tralee.

Ah ! you've a taste for lightness, Miss :
Through you I can clearly see—
On pilgrimage such as this is
You will need no company.

Ah ! that reminds me,

Larila,

Of the father of Tralee.

On pilgrimage such as this is
You will need no company.
Kiss me five times or six, and this
Perchance shall pardon thee.

Ah ! that reminds me,

Larila,

Of the father of Tralee.

Kiss me five times or six, and this
Perchance shall pardon thee.
Father a thousand thanks ; what bliss
In penitence may be !

Ah ! that reminds me,

Larila,

Of the father of Tralee.

A LEGEND OF BRITTANY

Whence come you so muddy, Monsieur le curé?
Whence come you so muddy, Monsieur le curé?
From the fair and the market, Simonne, my
 Simonne;

 From the fair and the market,
 My little Mignonne.

What have you brought for me, Monsieur le curé?
What have you brought for me, Monsieur le curé?
Pretty slippers to dance in, Simonne, my Simonne;
 Pretty slippers to dance in,
 My little Mignonne.

When will you give them me, Monsieur le curé!
When will you give them me, Monsieur le curé!
When you know how to work them, Simonne,
 my Simonne;

 When you know how to work them,
 My little Mignonne.

I can sew well and knit well, Monsieur le curé;
I can sew well and knit well, Monsieur le curé.
In that case you must have them, Simonne,
 my Simonne;

 In that case you must have them,
 My little Mignonne.

I so want you to confess me, Monsieur le curé?
I so want you to confess me, Monsieur le curé?
Tell me your worst sin then, Simonne, my
 Simonne,

 Tell me you worst sin then,
 My little Mignonne.

'Tis—that I love you so, Monsieur le curé!
'Tis—that I love you so, Monsieur le curé!
In that case, we must meet no more, Simonne my
 Simonne;

 In that case, we must meet no more,
 My little Mignonne.

No! No! that would kill me, Monsieur le curé!
No! No! that would kill me, Monsieur le curé!
Well then, I shall bury you, Simonne, my
 Simonne,

 Well then, I shall bury you,
 My little Mignonne.

Would you not weep a little, Monsieur le curé?
Would you not weep a little, Monsieur le curé?
No; I shall be singing, Simonne, my Simonne;
 “Requiescat in pace,”
 My little Mignonne.

JEALOUSY AND THE LIAR.

What were you doing at the fountain ?

Corbleu, Marion ! *

What were you doing at the fountain ?

I went there to draw water,

Mon Dieu, mon ami†

I went there to draw water.

But with whom were you talking ?

Corbleu, Marion !

But with whom were you talking ?

'Twas with our neighbour's daughter,

Mon Dieu, mon ami

'Twas with our neighbour's daughter.

Women do not wear breeches,

Corbleu, Marion !

Women do not wear breeches.

'Twas her skirt the wind twisted,

Mon Dieu, mon ami !

'Twas her skirt the wind twisted.

Women do not carry swords,

Corbleu, Marion !

Women do not carry swords.

'Twas her distaff hanging down,

Mon Dieu, mon ami !

'Twas her distaff hanging down.

Women do not grow moustaches,
Corbleu, Marion !

Women do not grow moustaches.
They were mulberries she was eating.
Mon Dieu, mon ami !
They were mulberries she was eating.

There are no mulberries in May,
Corbleu, Marion !
There are no mulberries in May.
'Twas a branch from last autumn,
Mon Dieu, mon ami !
'Twas a branch from last autumn.

Go and gather me a plateful,
Corbleu, Marion !
Go and gather me a plateful.
The little birds have eaten them all.
Mon Dieu, mon ami !
The little birds have eaten them all.

Then I shall cut your head off,
Corbleu, Marion !
Then I shall cut your head off.
But the Good God will take what's left——
Mon Dieu, mon ami !
But the good God will take what's left.

* Corbleu—an old-fashioned oath, from "Corps de Dieu."

† My God, my friend.

COLINETTE

No harm at all in that, Colinette,

No harm at all in that!

No harm at all in that, Colinette,

No harm at all in that!

Colinette tripped off to the wood
Dancing along in lightsome mood.

Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la!

To her a gallant gay drew near,
Curled a bit there, powdered here,

Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la!

Where are you going to, maiden fair?

I am going, Sir, to the little wood there

To gather a violet,

To gather a violet.

No harm at all in that, Colinette,

No harm at all in that!

No harm at all in that, Colinette,

No harm at all in that!

But a wolf appeared: what a dreadful plight
Poor Colinette was in such a fright.

Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la!

The gallant gay his weapon drew ;
This way, that way, the wolf he slew :
Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la !
Where are you going to, maiden fair ?
I am going, Sir, to the little wood there
 To gather a violet,
 To gather a violet.

No harm at all in that, Colinette,
 No harm at all in that !
No harm at all in that, Colinette,
 No harm at all in that !

To slay a wolf's not easy : this
Is quite well worth a little kiss,
Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la !
A little kiss—well let me see . . .
The gallant gay—why he took three,
Tra la la, Tra la la, Tra la la !
Maiden for fear of the wolf take care
That you go no more to the little wood there
 To gather a violet,
 To gather a violet.
No harm at all as yet, Colinette,
 No harm at all as yet !
No harm at all as yet, Colinette,
 No harm at all as yet.

IS IT THEN QUITE TRUE?

Is it then quite true?
Dear little maid!
That love came to you
In the darkling shade;
That love came to you
In the darkling shade;
That love came to you, with a flower or two?

In a world of your own
He found you, alone;
They say that you felt
In that arbour so still,
They say that you felt
In that arbour so still;
They do say that you felt a strange sudden thrill.

Now tell me, ma chère,
And repeat, if you dare,
That a young gallant,
For all you care,
That a young gallant,
For all you care,
That a young gallant may keep his present
Of a flower or two.

THE GRAND MANNER

Really, Javotte ; it must be stopped,
This growing up so uncurled :
You don't sufficiently adopt
The grand manner of the world.

For this is the way,
And that is the way—
Child, do please look at me—
For this is the way,
And that is the way
We do honour to the family.

On Sundays now, it is just a fact
That I, quite unconsciously,
With a certain swing from the hips, attract
The gaze of the passers by.

For this is the way,
And that is the way—
Child, do please look at me—
For this is the way,
And that is the way
We do honour to the family.

When a gentleman comes to woo
In his tender martyr style ;
You need say nothing ; all you'll do
Will be done with just a smile.

For this is the way,
And that is the way—
Child, do please look at me—
For this is the way,
And that is the way
We do honour to the family.

By my choice, then, you must be led ;
And ere the wedding chimes,
You'll answer, " Willingly I'll wed . . .
Not once, but thirty times."

For this is the way,
And that is the way—
Good breeding, child, you see—
For this is the way,
And that is the way
We do honour to the family.

WHEN THE LEAF WAS GREEN

When the leaf was green,
Tra la la, la la la,
When the leaf was green
I had lovers three ;
But now that 'tis dry,
Tra la la, la la la,
But now that 'tis dry
Only two want me.

Says my father, says he,
Tra la la, la la la,
Says my father, says he,
Now choose one of the two.
I won't have a rich one,
Tra la la, la la la,
I won't have a rich one,
They are quite too too.

I want my friend Pierre,
Tra la la, la la la,
I want my friend Pierre,
With the generous heart ;

He takes me to the dance,
Tra la la, la la la,
He takes me to the dance,
And we're seldom apart.

Returned from the dance,
Tra la la, la la la,
Returned from the dance,
Goodbye, whispers he.
When we're keeping house,
Tra la la, la la la,
When we're keeping house,
How happy we'll be.

THE KING HAS BID THE DRUMS ROLL

The King has bid the trumpets call,
Has bid the great drums roll,
To summon his dames : and the first of them all
Has ravished his soul.

“ Tell me, Marquis, do you know her,
That queenly dame ? God’s life ! ”
The marquis made him answer : “ Sir,
Sir King, she is my wife.”

“ Ah ! Marquis, happier you than we,
Wed to a wife so fair :
Yield her to us, and she shall be
Henceforth our royal care.”

“ Sire, if you were not the king,
Dread should my vengeance be ;
But subject to the throne may bring
Only a subject knee.”

“ Marquis, uplift those wrathful eyes,
And bend a kindlier glance
Upon your king who bids you rise
Grand Maréchal of France.”

“ Now robe thee, sweet, in raiment rare
Of whispering silks and lace,
Meet for my lady white to wear
Before her sovereign’s face.

Farewell my life, farewell my heart,
Farewell my hope ; ah ! fling
Thine arms about me : so, we part
To serve our lord the King.”

The queen has made a bouquet
Of whitest fleur-de-lyse,
And the odour of that bouquet
Has slain the fair Marquise.

The King has built a tomb, set it
Within his House of Ease ;
And on the tomb a scroll fair writ ;
“ Farewell, thou dear Marquise.”

THE DEATH OF JEAN RENAUD

- When Jean Renaud from war returns,
Spent with the wounds that battle earns ; *
- “ Here is my son ” ; from casement high
He hears his mother’s welcoming cry ;
- “ Renaud, Renaud now joyful be,
Thy wife hath born a king to thee.”
- “ He may not joy in wife or son,
Whose days upon the earth are done :
Death draws me now towards the dead ;
Oh, mother dear, prepare a bed,
But see that low you lay me, where
My wife no sound at all may hear.”
- And, ere the midnight hour is sped,
The soul of Jean Renaud has fled.
- “ Ah, mother dear, I fain would know
What they are nailing there below ? ”
- “ That is the carpenter, my dear,
Mending the staircase, whom you hear.”
- “ Ah, mother dear, I fain would know
What are the songs they chant below ? ”
- “ Daughter mine, it is but the sound
Of the procession passing round.”

“ Ah, mother dear, I fain would know
Whom hear I weeping there below ? ”
“ Oh, there our neighbour weeps forlorn
Over her dying child new-born.”
“ Ah, mother dear, tell me, I pray,
Which of these dresses to wear to-day.”
“ Leave the grey one and leave the red,
Take the black dress for choice instead.”
“ Ah, mother dear, I fain would know
Why tears fall from your eyes also ? ”
“ Daughter the truth must now be said,
Jean Renaud is dead and buried.”
“ Go you, mother, the grave-side to,
Tell them to dig the grave for two ;
And bid them make the hole so wide
That the child may lie by parent’s side.
Open earth, divide, and bring
Me once again beside my king.”
The earth has oped—earth sundered,
And the beautiful spirit fled.

* Literally “ Holding his entrails in his hands.” There are several readings of this line.

GARDEN OF LOVE

When I go to my garden,
My garden of love,
The turtle dove croons
From boskage above :
“The day’s at an end
And the wolf doth rove ;
My fair one, my friend,
Oh ! list to the dove,” . . .
When I go to my garden,
My garden of love.

When I go to my garden,
My garden of love,
The flowers to me bend
Saying, “Fear not, sweet friend ;
’Tis the close of day,
And one whom you love
Is coming this way.
Then heed not the dove,” . . .
When I go to my garden,
My garden of love.

When I go to my garden,
My garden of love,
I hear a foot-fall,
Fear sounds a recall;
'Tis the close of the day,
I would go, I would stay,
I would stay—I would go;
And my heart's beating so
I heed not the flowers,
I heed not the dove,
When I go to my garden,
My garden of love.

MOTHER GOODTIME

Mother Goodtime, one day,
Said as she passed the girls among,
Dance, children, I say,
While yet you all are young.
Gaiety's flower
Knows no summer hour:
Born in the spring time like the rose,
Gather it e'er its beauty close.
Dance, my dears, at fifteen years,
Later on the time's gone by.

At twenty years my heart
Held the charms of the love-god dear:
The little deceiver's dart
Caused me to shed many a tear.
Exacting is he,
Fickle, cross as can be;
Maiden who 'neath his empire lies,
Flees from the world and dreams and sighs.
Dance, my dears, at fifteen years,
Later on the time's gone by.

Pleasure and laughter
Danced together at my wedding :
 Very soon after
Dull old care had put his head in.
 While my husband growled,
 And my baby howled,
Could I, unskilled to hold the helm,
Be always playing under the elm.
 Dance, my dears, at fifteen years,
 Later on the time's gone by.

 Swiftly the hours fly,
 Soon my grandchild lay on my breast :
At that stage you'll know why
Dancing has lost interest.
 A cough while talking,
 Tremors while walking :
Instead of dancing the gavotte,
From an armchair you babble of what . . .
 Dance, my dears, at fifteen years,
 Later on the time's gone by.

THAT MAY NOT BE

Lucas one day in the meadow,
Chanced to meet the maiden Rose,
A Rose that in sun and shadow
To fullness of beauty blows :

“Of this flower, Rose, love laden,
Deign to make a present to me.”

“Monsieur Lucas, replied the maiden ;
That may not be : that may not be.”

“For every day my mother
Gives me counsel : Guard your rose,
Though always some lover or other,
Would pluck the flower that grows.
'Tis all in vain you torment Rose,
With a song on my lips, I flee.
Empty away the follower goes ;
That may not be : that may not be.”

Maiden, if you have yet your rose,
I charge you to guard it well ;
Toward that blossom while it blows
The hunger of love is fell.
That roguish god to pluck your flower
The day long is behind you, he :
When tenderness brings the tempting hour
That may not be ; that may not be.

BABET AND CADET*

At dead midnight from the fête
Returning; Babet, Cadet;
“Heavens! it’s dreadfully late,
We *must* make haste, Babet.”
“Turn time to account, addle pate,”
Hey diddle, hey day day—
“I’m too frightened,” said Cadet;
“I’m not frightened,” said Babet;
Hey diddle, hey day day.

They crept on, groping their way;
To Cadet terrors were rife,
When sudden a voice cries; “Stay!
Your money or else your life.”
Two merry robbers are they—
Hey diddle, hey day day—
One robber had seized Cadet,
One robber had seized Babet—
Hey diddle, hey day day.

One robber like an omelette
Was spinning young Cadet round;
The other, more eager yet,
In his arms held Babet bound;

Was rumpling her collarette—
Hey diddle, hey day day—
“I am dying,” said Cadet;
“I am dying,” said Babet—
Hey diddle, hey day day.

Eyes starting out of his head,
Home again arrived Cadet:
All pensive and silenced,
Slowly followed him, Babet.
She was sighing, poor little maid—
Hey diddle, hey day day—
“I’ll not come back that way, Babet,”
“I shall come back that way, Cadet,”—
Hey diddle, hey day day.

* The second syllable of both names is pronounced to rhyme with “day.”



19th CENTURY

THE LEAF

ANTOINE VINCENT ARNAULT

1815

Away from the green stalk torn,
Poor leaf, so sere and forlorn,
Whither goest thou?—I know not.
The tempest has struck amain
The oak* that substained my lot:
On wings of the changing gale,
Zephyr or wild hurricane,
Onward now, henceforth, I sail
From the forest to the plain,
From the mountain to the vale,
I go where the winds are fain.
Without fear, without quarrel,
I go whither all soon goes,
The leaf of every laurel
And the leaf of every rose.

* Napoleon Buonaparte.

A CHILD'S FUNERAL

CHARLES DOVALLE

1807—1829

One day as I was passing by
That close with the wall before it,
I saw a young child's coffin borne;
Two men from the village bore it.

A woman who walked behind them,
Was weeping, and whispering low
The measured and mournful prayer
That we pray for the dead we know.

No relations; family none!
As the stretch of white road I scanned,
I saw only a little maid
Hiding her tears beneath her hand.

She followed that long avenue
That leads on to the fields of rest,
And in deepest distress she seemed,
As she stifled the sobs in her breast.

When, on their way, they were passing
The foot of that tall poplar tree,
The men at work near them all stopped,
And each one went down on his knee,

Just to make the sign of the cross,
To God for the young soul to pray;
And when the poor woman passed by,
Every head was turned away.

Before long, with our faces bowed,
At the cemetery we were.
A newly made grave was ready;
Then a man said, "It is there."

Then—the grave now empty no more—
They shovelled the earth in—and then
I saw only a low wet mound,
A branch of box on it; and when

The little maid, going away,
Was passing me, quite closely by,
I stopped her, just touching her cloak:
"You are crying, my child, say why?"

"'Tis that Julian, Sir," said she,
"Whom I called my brother, is dead."
And covering her deep black eyes,
Yet more tears the poor child shed.

HOW PRETTY SHE IS

PIERRE JEAN BÉRANGER

1780-1857

Great Gods! how pretty she is!
Whom I shall love alway.
The love dream dear to me is,
In her sad eyes to-day.
That her life lovely be, is
Their pleasure from on high.
Great Gods! how pretty she is!
And I am so ugly, I!

Great Gods! how pretty she is!
Scarce twenty years are there.
Her mouth so sweet to see is,
So fair her cloudy hair.
How high her gifts' degree is,
She only will deny.
Great Gods! how pretty she is!
And I am so ugly, I!

IF I WERE A LITTLE BIRD

PIERRE JEAN BÉRANGER

1780-1857

I who even near the fair,
Would live ever wandering,
How I envy in the air
The bird on his whirring wing!
Below him wide worlds float by!
Above him sweet air, blue sky:
From all the call to flit is heard.
I would swiftly, swiftly, swiftly fly,
 If I were a little bird.

And then when from Philomel
I had learned all sweetest sounds;
Shepherdess' songs I would swell
Upon her melodious rounds.
To the hermit then I hie,
Who, asking of none to buy,
To succour the poor is stirred.
I would swiftly, swiftly, swiftly fly,
 If I were a little bird.

Away then I to the wood,
Where the drinkers gaily clink,
Until sung to softer mood,
To beauty alone they drink.
Then my most-loved melody
To the warriors left to die
Were the hamlet's last sweet word.
I would swiftly, swiftly, swiftly fly,
If I were a little bird.

Then up to the towers I spring
Where the poor pent captives sigh,
Hiding well from them my wing,
To make plaintive harmony.
One smiles when he sees me nigh,
And one dreams where he doth lie,
Of his cradle by the herd.
I would swiftly, swiftly, swiftly fly,
If I were a little bird.

Then in hope a king to free
From ennui's wearying whim,
To a peaceful olive tree
I would go and sing to him.
Then away again would I
To a banished family,
With a green twig for a word.
I would swiftly, swiftly, swiftly fly,
If I were a little bird.

Then even to dawn's birthplace,
From you wrongdoers I would flee,
If love would no more enlase
In his nets the hapless me.
Unless in my heart, subtly,
This hunter, whom none deny,
Breathe again his snaring word ;
There would I swiftly, swiftly fly,
 If I were a little bird.

THE KING OF YVETOT

PIERRE JEAN BÉRANGER

He was a King of Yvetot*
But little known to story ;
Up late, early to bed he'd go,
And sleep soundly without glory.
At night, they say, for crown Jeanneton
A simple night cap of cotton

Put on.

Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! He ! He ! He ! He
What a good little king was he,
He, he !

He partook of each repast
In a palace thatched with yew,
And on a donkey far from fast
He rode his kingdom through.
Joyous, simple, in good a believer,
His only guard was a retriever

Ever.

Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! He ! He ! He ! He !
What a good little king was he,
He, he !

He had no expensive whim
Save a rather lively thirst ;
But King whose subjects joy in him
Must live as well as the worst.
So the wine at table he attacks
And on to every hogshead tacks

A tax

Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! He ! He ! He ! He !
What a good little king was he,
He, he !

He did not enlarge his states,
Was an easy-going neighbour,
And, model to all potentates,
Made pleasure the code for labour.
'Twas only when at length he died,
His people at their King's grave-side

All cried,

Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! He ! He ! He ! He !
What a good little king was he,
He, he !

They still preserve that land within
The portrait of this good prince;
It forms the signboard of an Inn
Famous in all the province.
Often, on fête days, linking
Before it, crowds shout, clinking,

Drinking.

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! He! He He He!
What a good little king was he,
He, he

* This is not a historic fiction. Yvetot was a little kingdom, four or five leagues in circumference, whose archives date from the 14th century. Its army consisted of one or two "gardes champêtres." It is situate in Normandy between Havre and Rouen. M. Masson.

MY NORMANDY

FRÉDÉRIC BÉRAT

1800—1855

When all things waken from their trance,
And winter elsewhere turns ;
When to the skies of our fair France
A kindlier sun returns ;
When green again is every tree,
When the swallow skims the earth,
I seek once more my Normandy,
Tis the land that gave me birth.

Through vales Helvetian I have been,
By her chalets and glaciers,
The skies of Italy have seen,
And Venetian gondoliers ;
But while saluting each country,
I said ; no retreat upon earth
Is fairer than my Normandy,
Tis the land that gave me birth.

In all our lives there comes a stage
When every dream must end,
When the soul pensive grown in age
Takes memory for a friend ;
And when my muse will sing to me
Of love no more, nor of mirth,
I shall seek again my Normandy,
Tis the land that gave me birth.

THE YOUNG POET DYING

FRÉDÉRIC BÉRAT

1800—1855

Sweet dreams of fame I long for,
Love, glory, hopes youth bore,
Loved one I sang my song for,
Farewell for evermore !

I am the flower the wintry blast
Broke ere the break of day,
So is my life untimely cast
Full of hope and of love away.
Sweet dreams etc.

I would often say : Yes, my lyre
Breathes a music harmonious ;
I would say through the fever's fire ;
Yes, my name shall be glorious.
Sweets dreams etc.

Mother farewell, farewell Marie !
One more kiss before I die.
To die, alas ! when the fields will be
Ere so few days, flowery !

Sweet dreams of fame I long for,
Love, glory, hopes youth bore ;
Loved one I sang my song for,
Farewell for evermore !

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF LISETTE*

FRÉDÉRIC BÉRAT

Yes, children, I am that Lisette,
The poet's Lisette ; he
Whose ballads you, at eve, sing yet
Beneath the chestnut tree.
That singer whom the land adores,
Gave me and gives alway,
A love whose memory restores
My heart and hope to-day.

If you knew, children,
How pretty I've been !
When I was a girl—
'Twas a long while ago—
In the sweet seventeen,
Blue eyes and a curl
Set bewitchingly—so ;

Teeth brighter than pearl
In the sweet seventeen.
Twas a long while ago,
But Oh ! my dear children
You ought to have seen
What a pretty girl I was
At sweet seventeen !

He on earth whose heavenly songs
Craved the sunlit shadowy sky,
Fain to avenge the people's wrongs
Deep in dungeon foul did lie.
Men whom pride and power entrance,
Swear those lips no more shall sing ;
Fetter the feet, the lute sounds France,
Liberty, Lisette, and the spring.

If you knew, children,
How pretty I've been !
When I was a girl—
Twas a long while ago—
In the sweet seventeen,
Blue eyes and a curl
Set bewitchingly—so ;
Teeth brighter than pearl
In the sweet seventeen.
Twas a long while ago,

But Oh ! my dear children
You ought to have seen
What a pretty girl I was
At sweet seventeen !

Through the village, children, one day
A pedlar with images passed,
And I saw—God sent him, I say—
Once more my Béranger at last.
Dear face I now see every hour—
I would give for it even my dove—
For the face my old hands still embower
In lilac and lilies and love.

If you knew, children,
How pretty I've been !
When I was a girl—
Twas a long while ago—
In the sweet seventeen,
Blue eyes and a curl
Set bewitchingly—so ;
Teeth brighter than pearl
In the sweet seventeen.
Twas a long while ago ;
But Oh ! my dear children
You ought to have seen
What a pretty girl I was
At sweet seventeen !

* Bérat who entitled this song "Béranger's Lisette," was a friend of the famous "chansonnier."

TIME AND LOVE

JOSEPH ALEXANDRE, VICOMTE DE SÉGUR

1804

A certain old man, Time by name,
In long travel passing his days,
To the bank of a river came :
“ On my years have pity,” he prays.
“ Hey what ! on these banks I’m forgot,
I who count the hours as they chime ;
My good friends, pray forsake me not,
Come, come over and pass The Time.”

From the bank at the farther side
More maidens than one were peering,
And would bear him over the tide,
On a craft that Love was steering :
But one maiden of wiser aspect
Was repeating this prudent rhyme :
“ Ah ! how many have been shipwrecked
In seeking to pass The Time.”

Gaily then Love rows to the shore,
Disembarks beside Time and craves
To take him one voyage the more ;
They put forth to the winds and waves ;
And beating his feathery blades
Love sang, and the song was sublime :
“ See, see all you shepherdess maids
How well Love can pass The Time ! ”

But suddenly Love can no more ;
He wearies—t’was ever his fault.
Old Time in his stead takes the oar
Crying, “ What, so early to halt !
Poor child, art thou weary again ?
Sleep on, while I sing to my glass
Old Wisdom’s so ancient refrain :
Ah ! Time causes Love to pass.”

A beauty within the foliage
Laughed long and aloud to enjoy
The moral of the ancient sage
And the spite of the youthful boy.
“ Who is this,” said Time, “ that I hear
Defy Love and my years sublime ? ”
“ It is I,” said Friendship sincere,
“ Who have never feared aught from Time.”

TO A PERFECT FRIEND

MME. OLIVIER

1813-18—

In spite of death, in spite of life,
I will follow and adore thee ;
In spite of self, of follies rife,
My being breathes before thee.

Thou hast me captive to thy will,
When wandering moods are o'er me,
Across my furtive tears I still,
Alone, see thee before me.

The lightning soundeth not the night
As thy piercing glance doth sound me ;
The vast world's orb of laughing light
Hath not such arms around me.

When all things sleep beneath the tree
The last bird's song I hear, apart,
With voice less tender calls to me
Than doth thy voice to my heart.

“ I love thee, listen ! ” thus it says,

“ Thou shalt find all again in me.

Why dost thou flee ? why doubt always ?

Who then but I can save thee ?

“ I love thee more than thou a brother,

My name and my home thou dost know ;

Break the ties that bind thee to all other,

And deny me never ; no !

“ Fear me no more ; still faithful be ;

By thy side evermore am I :

But keep a wing to follow me

For I dwell in Eternity.”

THE LEGEND OF ST. NICHOLAS*

Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean,
Come at eve to a butcher man.
“ A lodging, Butcher, if you can.”
“ Come in, children, come in,” he cried,
“ Plenty of room for all inside.”
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

No sooner are they inside than he,
The wicked butcher, kills all three ;
And into little bits they're cut ;
Put, like pigs, in the salting butt.
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

Seven years passed : Saint Nicholas went
Through that same field when day was spent.
He too came to the butcher man :
“ Butcher, a lodging if you can.”
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

“ Come in, come in, Saint Nicholas ;
Plenty of room for both of us.”
Soon as the Saint has entered, he
Asks for his supper speedily.
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

“ A piece of that salt meat I will cut,
Kept seven years in your salting butt.”
Soon as the butcher heard that said,
Swiftly out by the door he fled.
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

“ Butcher, butcher, nay do not flee ;
Repent, and God will pardon thee.”
Saint Nicholas a hand doth put
On the rim of the salting butt.
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

“ Little children, who sleeping lie,
The great Saint Nicholas am I.”
The saint holds up three fingers : see !
Up the little ones rise, all three.
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

The first said : " I have slept so well."
The second : " Better than I can tell."
The youngest of the three replies ;
" I thought I was in paradise."
Three little children who have been
Out in a harvest field to glean.

* The patron saint of children and lovers.

POETRY AND LOVE

Love far from my thoughts, I wandered,
Ruminating a rhyming scheme,
Where fancy had vainly pondered
The right turn to give to my dream.
The refrain was half heard within,
The mutinous rhyme afar seen:
I wanted an Alexandrin,*
When I met Alexandrine.

“Good morning”—she smiled; “Is it you.”
“I’m composing a verse, as you see.”
“Complete it in my house, Ah do!
I live quite close by,” implored she.
What hair! Ah! what lily white skin,
Eyes blue as a heaven serene!
I left my Alexandrin,
And I followed Alexandrine.

What did we? Oh! never a verse;
For she loved love better in prose.
We played at—at pastimes diverse
Till a petal slipped down from the rose

For I fashioned a rhyme that would win
Hearts harder than ever have been.
I had found the Alexandrin
That could conquer Alexandrine.

And the years in their fever of haste,
Are fled as the beat of a wing,
And the souvenirs all, now effaced,
Have left me but this that I sing :
Are the women less easy to win
Or we old men not what we have been ?
I make many an Alexandrin,
But where now is Alexandrine?

* The Alexandrin is the twelve-syllabled line commonly adopted in French poetical drama.

THE HUSSARS OF THE GUARD

You know the Hussars of the guard, you say :
Did you never, by chance, their trombone
discover ?

What an amiable air when he looks your way :
Well, my dear—he was my lover.

At the Luxembourg I made his acquaintance :
And Oh ! how magnificent he did look :
What conquering airs ! what a noble presence !
When his instrument up to his mouth he took.
You know the Hussars, etc.

The very first day that he saw me in person,
I thought he was going to fall into a swoon,
For her sighed, Oh ! louder than even his
trombone,
Till for pity I could have fainted as soon.
You know the Hussars of the Guard, etc.

He is gone, and I am waiting for news of him
From Lille in Flanders—his garrison's there ;
Ah ! he's still true—let them say what they
choose of him,
Or else in coke fumes I will end my despair.
You know the Hussars, etc.

Believe me, he was a love of a boy :
Do you wonder, Julia, how madly I dote ?
To oblige him I would have given my joy,
My life ; would have sold to my last petticoat.

You know the Hussars of the Guard, you say :
Did you never by chance their trombone
discover ?

What an amiable air when he looks your way :
Well, my dear—he was my lover.

OLD BOY

What ! didn't you know my age ?

I'm eighty years old almost :

And that's a pretty long stage

And means many old friends lost.

But for all that, I am gay,

Aye, and still can play my part ;

Never ill for a half a day

I am sound in head and heart.

They call me Old Boy, old Full of Joy,

For on Joy it is that I thrive :

They call me Old Boy, old Full of Joy,

And the Old Boy's still alive.

I've my umbrella if it pours,

And, whenever 'tis cold, my cloak ;

And supposing sometimes life bores,

There is always the wind in the oak.

And since mother nature, I found,

Took care of the birds in the tree ;

Well, I let the world go round.

Read the papers ? No, not me.

They call me Old Boy, etc.

Once I knew the colour of gold,
But " No " was so hard to say
That now I am growing old
There's little to give away.
But there ! what have I to fear ?
I've enough for my daily bread,
And a cup of wine to cheer,
And God's sun overhead.
They call me Old Boy, etc.

I heard it said all around
That our young men now are mad,
But they're no worse, I'll be bound,
Than I was once, if as bad.
Eh what ! and shall we all bleat,
And scold their love brightened days ?
The women are so—so sweet,
And one cannot love always.
They call me Old Boy, etc.

Ah well ! I am past surprise ;
And whenever comes the call
To set out for yonder skies,
I'll be ready package and all.
And though it be almost done,
I have done what good I might ;
When I am beneath the stone
Upon it I'd have them write.

They call me Old Boy, old Full of Joy,
For on joy it is that I thrive :
They call me Old Boy, old Full of Joy,
And the old Boy's still alive.

BETWEEN PARIS AND LYONS

Between Paris and Lyons—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair :
Marguerite and Madelon
Were really a charming pair.

Between Paris and Lyons,
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair.

Eyes black as coal from the pit—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
A chin suggestive of wit—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
Figure enticingly neat,
A nose turned up just a bit.

There is the portrait of Marguerite,
You can make what you like of it.

Between Paris and Lyons,
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair.

As lively as any wren—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
A straight nose, white skin and then—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
Fair hair that she combed in vain,
A golden mesh for the men ;
There is the portrait of Madeleine,
In eighteen hundred and ten.

Between Paris and Lyons,
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair.

Now each has for fiancé—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
A young man from down that way—

Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
In whose praises all are loud,
Two first-rate matches, all say ;
Of whom both the girls are proud,
But neither of whom they obey.

Between Paris and Lyons,
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair.

But lo and behold a squadron—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
Comes riding into the Canton—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
Marguerite follows the Trumpet,
And, not to be left alone,
Madelon follows Clarionet—
And so both the birds are flown.

Between Paris and Lyons,
Was living Madame Gothon
And her two daughters fair.

And thus all alone is left—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
The mother, of girls bereft—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There there—,
She weeps for her daughters fair;
But the drum-major, so they say—
No, no, enough said, for I swear
I won't give the mother away.

Between Paris and Lyons—
Hey ho, Hey ho, There, there—
That is the history of Gothon,
And her two daughters fair.

THE THREE HUSSARS

They were three Hussars of the Guard,
Returning from war that day,
And gaily they sang and they sparred
Free and easily down the way.
“ I shall see my love again,
She is Margoton ” sang one.
“ She is Jeanneton.” “ She’s Madeleine
The one girl under the sun.”

But a man is across their way :
“ ’Tis old bell-ringer John I swear :
What news in the village to-day ? ”
“ Oh, nought ever happens down there.”
“ But Margoton, I used to meet ? ”
“ I rang for her vows last year ;
She is Sister Marguerite
In the convent a league from here.’

“ And Jeanneton, mine of old time ? ”

“ Before last December’s cold
I was ringing her wedding chime,
Her firstborn is ten days old.”

“ My Madeleine,” the third said, “ say
She is happy ? ” “ Most happy of all.
Three months ago this very day
I was tolling her burial.”

“ Ringer, when next you meet Marguerite
In the convent of Sacred Head,
Lay my blessing down at her feet,
And tell her I’m off to wed.”

“ Ringer, when next you see Jeanneton
In her home ; tell her, in my name,
That I am a captain now, and gone
A hunting, for bigger game ! ”

“ Ringer, when you see my mother again,
Bend low the white head before ;
Then tell her I still at the wars remain,
And that I return no more.”

“ I’VE PASSED THAT WAY ”

Suzanne was twenty, it seems :
Gertrude not yet sixteen ;
When each, from a soul serene,
Told me her golden dreams.
And I, from experience won,
Spoke to those children that day.
“ Love is an evil begun :
Believe me—I’ve passed that way.

“ Love comes not always to joy,
Too often they two dwell apart,
With a hope or a dream for a toy,
Till, awakening, breaks the heart.
Though lovely be love at your years,
You both will discover, one day,
That love must be paid for in tears,
Believe me : I’ve passed that way.

“ Yes, sweet are the vows he will breathe,
Ah ! tender the promise he’ll make,
And tender the dreams you will wreathe
When your eyes are aflame for his sake.
Till, at length, though you call and recall,
Joy passes for ever away ;
For the loser at love loses all :
Believe me ; I’ve passed that way.”

While thus I remembered love’s woes,
Suzanne and Gertrude, dewy-eyed,
Dried each one a tear as it rose,
And both in a whisper replied—
“ Very good the advice that you give,
We agree with it, all that you say ;
But, to live without love is not to live,
We’d much rather pass that way.”

THE LEGEND OF THE CONSCRIPT

“My friend,” said a maid to her lover at parting,
When he for the army, a conscript, was starting:
“Whatever befall I shall love thee alway.

Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

Seven years pass, and in anguish she sees
That her lover returns not from over the seas :
Sadly approving she writes but to say ;

“Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

The Rose now is fading as year follows year,
Yet still to the portrait that hangs ever near,
With sad repetition she sighs, day by day,

“Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

One day, through the village, the poor long forgot
Saw her lover, a marshal, ride ; he saw her not :
But stiff on the saddle he passed on his way.

“ Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

Thus then forsaken, this poor Fortune's fool
Sank down into madness : the children from
school

Could hear her harsh voice shrilling loud
through their play :

“ Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go, my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

Her eyes on the sun as it sank in the west,
Alone with the evening she passed to her rest,
Still crooning alow, poor, poor castaway :

“ Go my friend, go,
The flag calls thee away ;
Go, my friend, go,
My heart waits thee alway.”

THE “ RUE D'ANJOU ” AND THE “ RUE D'POITOU ”

By the street that is called D'Anjou
Each morning to work Claude goes :
By the street that is called D'Poitou
On the same errand bent, goes Rose.
She lived in the Rue D'Anjou,
And Claude in the Rue D'Poitou.
Now that, to every Parisian, shows
That every morning Claude met Rose !
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

When thus on their way they met,
A trifle pale he would be ;
Just a trifle pale, and yet
The reddest of Roses she :
And, of course by the merest chance,
They would each take half a glance
Before crossing to left and right,
Each keeping the other in sight,
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

One morning when they were meeting—
'Twas a shivery day, one of those
When it's raining half, and half sleeting—
Claude bumped right into Rose.
He was, you may guess, confounded
To see his Angel grounded.
"I looked the wrong way," stammered he
"I was watching your door," said she,
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

To lift her on to her feet
Claude, full of confusion, rushes.
Rose in the mud looks sweet,
And, I rather believe, she blushes.
"But I'll catch my death of cold;
Who will dry me? My mother will scold,
And I'm so afraid she'll appear;
We can see her windows from here."
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

Claude, not knowing what to do,
Puts his lodging at her disposal:
Rose, quite innocent too,
And in peril, accepts the proposal.
But—such mishaps will befall—

Her mother hears of it all ;
And she—not a moment to lose—
Is round there in just two twos,
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

She has barely time to say :
“ Oh Claude, why why have you led
My daughter so far astray ? ”
When Claude says, shaking his head ;
“ 'Tis you rather, I should say,
Who seem to have lost your way.
I was talking to Rose, 'tis true,
But we're on the right road, mark you ;
For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.”

Not very long after that,
The girls in the Rue D'Anjou
Met, each in best frock, best hat,
The girls in the Rue D'Poitou
At a wedding ; and afterwards they
All dined at the Bonvallet.
And each girl, seeing how happy is Rose,
Hopes—so, they tell me, the story goes—
That the same thing may happen again.

Who knows ?

For, you see, the Rue D'Anjou
Runs into the Rue D'Poitou.

THE BELLS OF NANTES

In the prison of Nantes
A prisoner lies,
A prisoner lies
Whom nobody eyes,
But the Gaoler's daughter.
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

Whom nobody eyes
But the Gaoler's daughter,
But the Gaoler's daughter
She brings at sunrise
Bread and some water.
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

She brings at sunrise
Bread and some water,
Bread and some water :
“ They say in the town
That to-morrow one dies.”
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !
Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

“ If to-morrow I die
What aid do you bring?
Unbind me my feet ”
All the bells of Nantes
Have begun to ring.

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

All the bells of Nantes
Have begun to ring,
Have begun to ring ;
The maiden is young,
She is bitterly weeping.

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

The maiden is young
She is bitterly weeping,
She is bitterly weeping.
The prisoner has sprung
Clear into the river.

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

The prisoner has sprung
Clear into the river,
Clear into the river.
Long live, maidens of Nantes,
And all you deliver.

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

Ah ! Ah ! Ah !

LOVE

Tell me, my heart, my heart flame wrought,
What is love, that word so fleeting?
Two souls it is, and but one thought,
Two hearts that as one are beating.

How came it, say, that love arose?
Love is there—because it is there!
How comes it, say, love lightly goes?
It is not love, gone elsewhere!

Tell me then what the true love is?
It is that which breathes in others.
And what the love found quenchless? 'Tis
The silent love of mothers.

How grows the wealth that love doth seek?
It just grows by giving ever.
And how doth her strong passion speak?
Love loves—and speaketh never.

MODERN SONGS

THE LIMER

JEAN RICHEPIN

There lived a lad, I learn,
Lon lon laire, lon lan la,
There lived a lad, I learn,
Who loved without return.
Said she ; "bring me to-morrow,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la ;
Said she bring me to-morrow,
Your mother's heart for my dog."

Hies he and slays his mother,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la,
Hies he and slays his mother,
Then runs off to the other.
But as he ran he stumbled,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la,
But as he ran he stumbled ;
To earth the heart has tumbled.

And while the heart was rolling,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la,
And while the heart was rolling,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la;
He heard its accents mild,
Lon lan laire, lon lan la;
And thus the heart spoke, weeping;
“Hast hurt thyself, my child?”

THE MORPHIA TAKER

LORRIEN

I can sleep no more : when the darkness falls,
I see a swarm of things stir in the gloom :
Bats ; great eyes of the shadowy tomb ;
Rats from within the dead-house walls.
And then I take the consoling flask.
Quick, one prick : I am healed again !
'Tis my third this morning, since you ask.

And so, if I have delusions, why
'Tis only since a man brought me where
Hearts are broken, as mine is—there !
Others drink—I take morphia, I.

I am sometimes just a little unwise,
I take too much, as I have to-day,
And I feel as though there were sand in my
eyes . . .
I see him again : I see him, say

God ! how sweet he is ! Ah, and how tender !
How caressing ! Dost love me ; adore ?
Where's he going to ? Gone ! . . . dust and
cinder,
What's wrong with me ? . . Good ; dream more.

Morphia, morphia ! Oh, it is sweet,
The delicious cold within,
Like melted pearls from head to feet
Flowing liquid under the skin.
If I should die at the Salpêtrière,*
There as well as elsewhere, any day :
And Monsieur Charcot,† by way of prayer,
Before my cold body will say.

The poor demented woman ! See,
'Twas her lover who brought her here !
She had rather too much sorrow. There !
Others drink ; she took morphia, she.

* A lunatic asylum for females at Paris.

† The late eminent specialist in mental and nervous diseases

THE DRUNKARD

JULES JOUY

“ Parents unknown ” is all one can hear.
At Clichy*—a hundred francs a year—
She sleeps on the floor of a hovel drear,
The drunkard.

From early morning she may be seen,
The roadway and the path between,
Wandering ; such a haggard mien,
The drunkard.

An ancient shawl now worn threadbare,
Old hat askew on unkempt hair ;
Walks lonely, muttering to the air,
The drunkard.

Lookers on moved to gay tirade,
Lounging there in their dwelling's shade,
Laugh. See she's sporting her cockade
The drunkard !

Stray dog, wildly seeking its lair ;
Wandering, often knowing not where,
Far from the barrier, here and there,
The drunkard.

Round about her a herd of boys
Running, hooting, singing ; no noise
Nor even such escort annoys
The drunkard.

But she, to all the yelling guard
Blindly indifferent, makes forward
Until with pebbles they bombard
The drunkard.

To wrong so brutal not yet dead,
Blood down her forehead flowing red,
She stops at last and turns her head,
The drunkard.

They all forgetting then their parts,
Fly, black fear biting at their hearts,
Before the glance that on them darts
The drunkard.

Among the passers on the way,
Flaunting her vice, in tresses gray ;
" She's surely raving mad," say they,
The drunkard.

But, boy or workman, some who saw
Drew back to let her pass, in awe :
Who knows what black black sorrows gnaw
The drunkard ?

Weeping, perhaps, a well-loved son,
Dreaming of happy hours once won,
She longs at eve that life were done,
The drunkard.

* On the north-west side of Paris outside the fortifications

ROSA THE RED

ARISTIDE BRUANT

I'm Rosa : Bazouge is my man.
I've got red 'air, and a 'ead that can . . .
When I pass they say, " There's La Rouge " *
At Montrouge.†

There's some coves sees everything white ;
Can't see nothing else—'e 's not that, quite.
Blood's in 'is 'ead, an' 'e sees it, red
At Montrouge.

'Is dad never done nothing but growse ;
Undertaker 'e was in " The Slaughter 'Ouse " †
That's why they used to call 'im Bazouge
At Montrouge.

It's my bloke's fault : it's grown 'is 'abit :
'E'll bleed a man as you'd bleed a rabbit.
There's no biz out when 'e 's about
At Montrouge.

While I 'as the toff in the corner at play,
My man's around—not fur away—
And next mornin' the copper finds some “rouge ”
At Montrouge.

* La Rouge—The Red.

† Montrouge is on the south side of Paris, just beyond the fortifications.

‡ A reference to Zola's play, “L'Assommoir.”—“The Slaughter House.”

AT LA VILLETTE*

ARISTIDE BRUANT

'E wasn't 'ardly twenty years :
Never knew 'is parents that I 'ears.
They called 'im Toto Laripette,
At La Villette.

Some of 'is ways might p'raps annoy :
Oh ! but 'e was a pretty boy,
The very best you ever met
At La Villette.

'E wasn't as neat as 'e might 'ave been,
'Is clothes not the smartest ever seen,
But 'e made up for that with 'is cap, so set
At La Villette.

Two little eyes 'e 'ad,—like mice—
And a pair of whiskers—rather nice,
With curls on top, as black as jet,
At La Villette.

A great big dawg 'e used to keep :
The sort they use for worryin' sheep :
No kop to keep 'a 'are for pet
At La Villette.

As for 'is trade or wot 'e did,
'Is work, day-time, was mostly kid :
At night 'e'd count my 'oof, when we met
At La Villette.

I loved 'im as much as 'e loved me :
We'd never 'ave parted—no, not we,
If there 'adn't been coppers there, you bet,
At La Villette.

Take 'em little, or big and strong,
We can't keep 'em—not for long
They all goes off to La Roquette,†
From La Villette.

When last I see 'im they'd got 'im fair :
'E was 'arf naked down to there,
And under the knife 'is neck was set
At La Roquette.

* On the north-east side of Paris, not far from the "Gare du Nord."

† The prison of La Roquette, on the east side of Paris, close to the cemetery of Père La Chaise, was until recently the scene of public executions.

MY HEAD

GASTON SECRETAN

Along the fortifications,
No error, the smartest I,
With my three-flapped cap's attractions
And my flaming scarlet tie.
The other chaps! Well, I'm a bit too fly,
I oust them, when all is said.
That's why they watch with a jealous eye
My head!

With the girls there's keen competition :
Want to come to me—down to a maid.
I don't offer much opposition ;
Polygamy's half my trade.
I am always calm and collected,
And generally get well fed ;
That's the best of keeping respected
My head!

When a sergeant cuts up nasty,
And would try force or resistance ;
I give it him back, hot and hasty—
Not my fault, I never had patience.

You talk ! If he's really an athlete,
The strongest that ever was bred,
I just stick in the pit of his stomach
My head !

When the night comes—time for earning—
I await, by the dark side gate,
The old bourgeois drunk returning,
And soon have settled his fate.
Then groaning he lies in the light of
The moon glow that's over me shed,
And spits up his soul but at sight of
My head !

I shall be condemned, fate fulfilling ;
'Twill be proved I have taken a life :
And I shall await, pale and thrilling,
The crash of the guillotine knife.
They will wake me one day—I hear hooting—
“ 'Tis this morning ; get out of that bed.”*
I go forth, and the crowd are saluting
My head !

* Literally “Make your toilet.” The “last toilet” is the term given to the operation of cutting the condemned man's shirt low at the neck and cropping his hair close, before execution.

A NORMAN IDYLL

MARINIER

- Our neighbour's son from over the way,
Mathurin, met me the other day,
When I was walking quite at my ease
To the next village with butter and cheese.
"Where are you going?" "What's that to you?
I'm going, you rogue, where there's work to do."
"Why, good" says he, with mysterious air;
"So happens I too am bound for there."
Now wasn't that a funny affair?
Such a very funny affair!
- "Now, Margoton, come along with me,
There's a little path that narrows, see!"
But in the wood he behaved so droll,
Just like a cat that must rub and roll.
"Mathurin, what's the matter with you?"
"Beg pardon," said he, "but I always do
Behave in that curious way, my fair,
When I've got a desire I can't declare."
Now wasn't that a funny affair?
Such a very funny affair!
- "This desire of mine is to have a kiss,
A hundred wouldn't be far amiss."

“No, Monsieur Mathurin, be good, please ;
That would turn both the butter and cheese.”

“Stupid, ’tis such an amusing game,
And innocent too ; you’ll say the same.
For proof, your father and mother, I swear,
Kiss often enough when you’re not there.”
Now wasn’t that a funny affair ?

Such a very funny affair !

Said I : “If the old ones kiss, I may
After all do much the same as they.
’Tis a very moral act, I guess,
And will prove my filial tenderness.”
He embraced me once, embraced me twice,
So hard that the day passed in a trice
At this occupation rather rare :
And I said, “My mother!—Oh well, there ! there !”
Now wasn’t that a funny affair ?

Such a very funny affair !

When I got back to my home again,
I told my mother the truth out plain.
“I have just been kissing young Jean Pierre,
Like you kiss father when I’m not there.”
From the beating mother gave to me
My story’s moral you’ll plainly see ;
Which is that you mustn’t—the thing is clear—
Do as your mother does everywhere !
Now wasn’t that a funny affair ?

Such a very funny affair !

MOTOR CAR AND BERLINE*

JACQUES RÉDELSPERGER

Pierrot of old inditing
A ballad to Cynthia,
Needed not to follow his writing
With a panther skin or bear.
In place of that so hideous mask,
A dainty veil of lace
But made your quest a lighter task
For the bright eyes in the face.
No haste in days of old renown,
No need to grease the machine ;
They eloped without the blinds pulled down,
Lying snug in the old Berline.

The postilion in gay good humour
Cracked his whip loud in the air,
And the impassive labourer
Said : " Lovers are passing there."
We laughed at all who then aspired
To sixty an hour on the flat ;

And though we were not pneumatic-tyred
The way seemed better for that.
For the jolting all along the land
Shook Harlequin near Columbine,
And prettily each took hand in hand
To caress in the old Berline.

But Pierrot to-day must squire his dame
From beneath a bear skin pall,
Forgetting even the old pet name,
And, losing his head, lose all.
And if, unhappily, he would show
That a man may human be,
Out of his motor he needs must go,
To make love behind a tree!
Ah! how much better the days now dead—
Though a hill delay might mean—
When Pierrot lay rather less like lead
On the cushions of old Berline.

* Berline, an old form of carriage. The word will be familiar to readers of Carlyle's "French Revolution."

PIERROT THE TOPER

JACQUES RÉDELSPERGER

Well yes, I drink. When do I drink?
Between my meals: no harm I think,
Since they are so few, in glasses clink.
'Tis only the wine within has grace

To take their place.

For where, Oh where, should we drown despair,
If we had not the golden wine?

Parbleu! the well fed, down whose throats
Tumble the cakes of wheat and oats,
All are warm in their overcoats.
I drink deeper than a river

When I shiver.

For where, Oh where, should we drown despair,
If we had not the golden wine?

All the sick and suffering ones,
Misery laden under the suns;
Coughing, from chests like hollow tuns:

They tell them, " You mustn't drink."

Oh Lord, to think !

For where, Oh where, should we drown despair,

If we had not the golden wine?

When my little ones seek in vain

A crust to stifle the empty pain ;

Crying ; " Father, I'm hungry again."

In the Devil's name—I drain it clear

And don't seem to hear.

For where, Oh where, should we drown despair,

If we had not the golden wine?

And when suddenly you discover

Your Columbine has got a lover,

And the news rather knocks you over :

Blessed be the bumper's aid,

And the comrade.

For where, Oh where, should we drown despair,

If we had not the golden wine?

PIERROT ASSASSIN

JACQUES RÉDELSPERGER

I first see Columbine on a morning of spring ;
Her eyes are the colour of skies opening :
Her lips to my kisses so sweetly upreach,
I think myself tasting the heart of a peach.

Her voice is calling
My mystical love,
Like soft notes falling
From worlds above.

Through many a night—and nights, and nights,
Her long dark hair on my shoulder lights ;
And one dream dreaming, we sleep till morn,
Our hearts grown weary for love outworn.

And in the repose
Of her room's eclipse,
On her closed eyes close
And close my lips.

Ah, lying dream ! Ah, awakening curs'd !
One night, returning unlooked for, there burst
Sounds on my ear as of kiss upon kiss,
Nailed to the threshold I stand. What is this ?

For there lay two
In her chamber : her's !
I pause—what to do ?
Then my dagger stirs.

Ah how good it was, while my fingers crushed
The bare, soft, white throat, till the voice was
hushed :

Her eyes, her great eyes, stared out from her
head,

And I, like a tiger, blood maddened,
Have cut her throat,
Whom I loved the best,
And with my knee
Crushed in her breast.

And now for long nights, and nights, and nights,
Nothing I see but the candle lights,
The church, the coffin, my loved one's neck,
That only the bloody gashes deck.

All night,—Oh horror !—
Fear racked, I see
A mocking spectre
Who rails on me.

ADDITIONAL OLD SONGS

THE LITTLE PEDLAR

He was a little pedlar man—
Of love what shall we say?—
He was a little pedlar man,
Upon his peddling way.

He has asked for a lodging—
Of love what shall we say?—
He has asked for a lodging
Where three girls lodged that day.

He ogled one, he ogled two—
Of love what shall we say?—
He ogled one, he ogled two;
The prettiest looked his way.

You shan't have her, little pedlar man—
Of love what shall we say?—
You shan't have her, little pedlar man,
However much you pay.

The little pedlar man was smart—
Of love what shall we say?—
The little pedlar man was smart:
In his hamper she's stowed away.

She was not very well packed up
 Of love what shall we say?—
 She was not very well packed up;
 You could see her petticoat grey.
 What have you there, little pedlar man?—
 Of love what shall we say?—
 What have you there, little pedlar man,
 In your pretty hamper, pray?
 Oh, here are scissors, here are knives—
 Of love what shall we say?—
 Oh, here are scissors, here are knives
 And rings for the girls to-day.
 You are lying, little pedlar man—
 Of love what shall we say?—
 You are lying, little pedlar man,
 'Tis our daughter hidden away!
 Just give her back, little pedlar man—
 Of love what shall we say?—
 Just give her back, little pedlar man,
 Or you'll lose your life straightway.
 While yet I hold my sword in hand—
 Of love what shall we say?—
 While yet I hold my sword in hand,
 I will keep my love alway.
 Good-day to the company,
 Holloa!
 To the company; good-day.

MARION GOES TO THE WATER

Marion trotted off one day
With her pitcher to the well :
Its sides were so much crumbled away,
That down to the bottom she fell.
“ Aie, aie, aie,” said Marion.

It's sides were so much crumbled away,
Down to the bottom she fell.
There came three handsome youths that way—
And Marion in the well.
“ Aie, aie, aie,” said Marion.

There came three handsome youths that way—
And Marion in the well.
“ If we were to lift you out,” said they ;
“ What would you give, my belle ? ”
“ Aie, aie, aie,” said Marion.

“ Now say what you will give, my belle,
If we lift you out of this ? ”
“ I will give, by way of ransom, well . . .
I am willing to give—a kiss ;
“ Aie, aie, aie,” said Marion.

A kiss " says she, I'll give, but it's
Only by way of ransom : "
And then she daintily submits
To the youth she thinks most handsome.
 "Aie, aie, aie," said Marion.

THE DUMB GIRL

'Tis a poor dumb girl
To the meadow goes ;
'Tis the Virgin, holy
And good, who follows.

“ Good day, shepherdess,
Fair Isabeau :
On me will you one
Of your lambs bestow ? ”

“ I will ask my father
And my mother too,
If I may give one
Of my lambs to you ;
The fairest of all
My lambs to you.”

“ Good-day, my father,
My mother, good day.
A great lady walks
Through my flock to-day,
And begs for a lamb
Ere she goes her way.”

The parents amazed
More than words may tell,
To hear their dumb girl
Speaking so well.

“ Oh ! go and tell her,
Isabeau fair,
They are at her service,
To the best there.”

“ What did your father say,
Isabeau fair ? ”

“ They are at your service,
All my lambs there :
They are at your service,
To the most fair.”

“ Oh ! how I thank you,
Isabeau fair.
I am going to Paradise,
Paradise where
You shall be servant of
Jesus Christ, there.”

At the end of three weeks,
When dying she lies,
Come floating three angels
From far Paradise ;
Come floating three angels
To bid her arise.

CHARITY

God takes sometimes a beggar's state,
And through the world He goes :
He came to where a castle gate,
A castle gate uprose.

“ Lord who stands by the castle gate,
Give me of your charity.”

“ What wouldst thou then, here on me to wait ;
I have nought to give to thee.”

“ Give to me but the crumbs alone,
From your table cloth that fall.”

“ My crumbs! My crumbs to my dogs are thrown;
My little white dogs want all.
My little white dogs take hares for me,
And thou takest none at all.”

“ Lady who at the casement stands,
Give me of your charity.”

“ Come up, come up, my poor good man ;
Here the fire flames merrily.”

He mounts ; the evening hour wears late,
The board with supper is spread :
The lady takes her silver plate,
That the beggar be fitly fed.

The lady to her maiden says ;
“ Lead this poor man to his rest.”
“ Let them that choose to feed the poor
Go rest them too ; ’twere best.”
The lady takes a candlestick,
And leads him to his rest.

But when they to the chamber come,
It is flooded all with light.
“ Oh, tell me then, thou good poor man,
Whence comes this radiance bright ? ”
“ These are your own good works, Lady,
That are blazoned into sight.

As for your husband, Lady,
He shall surely die this night :
As for your husband, Lady,
To hell shall his soul take flight.
As for your servant, Lady,
She is sought by demons three.”
“ Oh tell, tell me, good poor man,
Must I too damned be ? ”
“ Oh, know no fear henceforth, Lady,
In Paradise you shall be ;
For that is what it means, Lady,
To give for charity.”

A MYSTIC SONG

Out for a walk, the other day,
I met sweet Jesus on the way.
My heart flies, flies, flies ;
My heart toward heaven flies.

He said to me ; “ Daughter what, seekest thou ? ”
“ I was seeking thee, Jesus sweet—and now
My heart toward heaven flies—
Humility and charity,
And also holy chastity.
My heart flies, flies, flies ;
My heart toward heaven flies.”

“ The gifts of perfect love are they,
Daughter, thine shall they be one day.”
My heart flies, flies, flies ;
My heart toward heaven flies.

THE BELLE IN THE GARDEN OF LOVE

The fair one is in the garden of love,
For six long weeks past she is there :
Her father everywhere seeks his dove,
And her lover is in despair.

Shepherd, shepherd, hast thou not seen,
Hast not seen the most beautiful ?
How is she clad ; is she in green ?
Is she in silk ; is she in wool ?

She is clad in whispering satin white,
And white mittens are on her hands ;
Her hair that floats in the breezes light,
Has a scent of flowerful lands.

Down there in the valley her sighs are heard,
Beside a fountain's brim ;
She holds in her hands a beautiful bird,
And tells her griefs to him.

Oh, little bird, how happy art thou
To be beauty's comforter !
While I, her lover, breathe here my vow,
But must not draw near to her

May one by the rose bush linger still,
Yet gather never a rose ?
Gather it, gather it if you will,
Since for you alone it blows.

A CONSCRIPT SONG

Marching out from Wolxheim,
Once yet again we turn :
Good-night my father, mother too ;
Who knows when I return ?

Marching into Strasbourg,
Once yet again we turn :
Good-night my brothers, sister too ;
Who knows when I return ?

Marching into Strasbourg,
Once yet again we turn :
Good-night my beautiful beloved,
Who knows when I return ?

Within the town of Strasbourg
We halt before "The Crown,"
And there together eat and drink ;
Yet all our hearts are down.

Marching out from Strasbourg,
Already throbs the drum.
Good-bye my father, mother, all ;
Who knows when home I come ?

THE WHITE ROE

They are mother and daughter,
Beneath the bough's shade,
The mother is singing,
But sighing the maid.
“What then do you weep for,
My girl Adelaide?”

“For a grief in my heart,
That I dread you should know.
All the day I am girl,
All the night a white roe;
The hunt is after me
By waste and by hollow.

’Tis Leon my brother
Who is worst of them all.
Go tell him, my mother,
That, lest evil befall,
Ere morning to-morrow
His hounds he recall.”

“ Good-morrow, my son.”

“ To you mother also.”

“ Where are your hounds, Leon ?

I farnish to know.”

“ They are in the forest

After the white roe.”

“ Recall them then, Leon,

Recall them, my son.”

Three times the horn sounded—

There heard him not one.

The fourth time it sounded,

The white roe is won.

“ Call hither my flayer !

Let the white roe be flayed.”

Says the flayer ; “ I wis not

What there is to be said ;

But the roe has fair hair,

And the breasts of a maid.”

’Tis the supper hour come.

“ Are all here for whom laid ? ”

“ I trow not,” says Leon,

We yet lack Adelaide.

How my eyes will rejoice

At the sight of the maid.”

“ You have only to eat,
On me everyone looks ;
My head lies on the dish,
My heart hangs on the hooks :
The rest of my body
Upon the spit cooks.”

Leon has gone forth,
A man in strong pain.
“ To have but one sister,
And her to have slain ! . . .

The arms of the flayer
Are crimson with stains
Of blood that our mother
Has poured through our veins.
I have let my hounds drink
As at water fountains.

For an evil so dark
Be this penitence sworn.
Seven years ere on me
A white shirt shall be worn :
Seven years I will sleep
Beneath a white thorn.”

SLEEP, LITTLE SON

Sleep, my little son, sleep :
The lambs are safe in the fold ;
Away there in the meadows browse the sheep ;
Sleep, little angel, all of gold ;
Sleep, my little son, sleep.
Sleep, my little son, sleep ;
Mother is shaking the boughs ;
A little dream fell on your slumber deep,
And father is guarding the sheep that browse :
Sleep, my little son, sleep.
Sleep, my little son, sleep ;
The lambs frisk over the sky ;
The stars of heaven are all of them sheep,
And the moon is the shepherd standing by ;
Sleep, my little son, sleep.
Sleep, my little son, sleep ;
And don't like a lambkin bleat ;
For fear lest the shepherd's dog leave the sheep
To bite my naughty little one's feet ;
Sleep, my little son, sleep.
Sleep, my little son, sleep ;
Go away, black dog, go away ;
Go away, little dog, and guard your sheep ;
Awake not my sleeping child, I say ;
Sleep, my little son, sleep.

WHENCE COMEST THOU ?

Whence comest thou ; whither away dost hie
So early Lord Star of the morning ?
With thy gold hair streaming against the sky,
Apparelled for heaven's adorning :
With those soft, clear eyes of deepening blue,
So freshly bathed in the morning dew.

And didst thou then think to be here alone ?
No truly, already we are mowing ;
We have mown for more than a half hour gone,
The young day is good for our growing :
When our hopes are high and hearts are light,
We breakfast with better appetite.

And the birds all are there as well as we,
On their little flutes they are playing ;
Behind the hedge upon every tree,
To each other, " Good Day " they are saying.
The turtle dove cooing music makes,
The bell of the Angelus awakes.

The stork is trying his beak with a stroke—
Thou knowest thy business as well as he—
And, little by little, the chimneys smoke :
Hear the mill wheel by the alder tree !
And how, from the dark beech wood, echoes
The sound of the axe's heavy blows.

Who are passing there in the morning ray,
With linen and baskets through the mead ?
They are the maidens so lively and gay,
Bringing the soup that, in faith, we need.
And Marianna—look down on her Star—
Smiles already on me from afar.

Were I the son of the Sun,
And my Marianna came by,
I would follow her, lost or won,
Had I to descend from the sky.
Though my mother weep for her son,
I would follow my love, or die ;
I would do what must needs be done,
And God pardon it me, pray I.

THE FUNERAL CONVOY

ROLLINAT*

The dead man passes into the mist,
In his coffin, beneath the boughs :
For black horses, two white cows :
And a farm cart slowly jolting,
The hearse that his state allows.
Alas ! a fine young fellow whose eyes !
Clear blue with the wayside flower vies.
The dead man passes into the mist
In his coffin beneath the boughs.

No crowd a babble upkeeping :
Each one in his Sunday blouse
Follows silent under the boughs :
And mourned by the father weeping,
The dead man passes into the mist
In his coffin, beneath the boughs.

* These three songs of Rollinat appear by arrangement with M. Fasquelle, Bibliothèque Charpentier, 11 Rue de Grenelle, Paris.

THE FIELD OF RAPE

ROLLINAT

In the field planted with young rape,
Where the rape and the beet grew fast ;
Before the great oxen gentle and grave,
I was passing when you passed.

A long while we spoke together,
Through the morning calm and sweet,
In the field planted with young rape,
With young rape and with beet.

And the morning so tamed you, sweet,
The maiden who, barefoot, braves
Long grasses the fresh dew laves,
That, smiling, you gave your lips to meet
My lips in the field planted with beet.

THE IDIOT

ROLLINAT

The wandering idiot who charms the snakes,
Hobbles all day over paths that creep
Through the black ravine and the marsh asleep,
Where at dawn the serpent swarm awakes.

When autumn has tinted the boughs and the brakes;
With fixed eyes, sadly and sweetly asway,
The wandering idiot who charms the snakes,
Wearying never, hobbles all day.

The vipers asleep on the marge of their lakes,
In chorus awaken at sound of his song;
And shrilling thin hisses they follow along,
A crowd of old gossips, each path that takes
The wandering idiot who charms the snakes.

APPENDIX

(Notes on the poets not spoken of in the concluding portion of the Introduction.)

Gilles Durant, Sieur de la Bergerie, was born at Clermont about 1550. He went to the bar, where his knowledge and eloquence attracted attention ; but, disliking his profession, he soon surrendered to an invincible love for poetry. His works comprise love poems, odes, sonnets, elegies, and translations from the Psalms. He died in 1615.

Jean Desmarets, born at Paris in 1595, was one of the first members of the French Academy. He wrote plays and also verse, some of which is very witty and gay. He died in 1676.

Jean Baptiste Molière, the most famous of French dramatists, was born in 1622 and died in 1673. He needs no introduction to English readers.

André Chénier was born in 1762. A journalist,

politician and poet of considerable genius, he was arrested by the committee of public safety for attacking the horrors of the Revolution, and was executed, with twenty-four others—one of them a woman—on the 25th of July, 1794. His best work has great merit. Sainte-Beuve speaks of him as “a box-wood flute, a golden bow, an ivory lyre;” but, outside the circle of his family and friends, he remained, until after his death, almost unknown as a poet.

Constance Marie de Théis, afterwards *Princesse de Salm-Dyck*, was born at Nantes in 1767, of a noble family of Picardy. “*Bouton de Rose*”—the song given in this book—was one of her first productions. She wrote much, including several plays, romances and *épîtres*, one of which, the “*Épître aux Femmes*,” was a reply in verse to *Ecouchard Lebrun*, who was vehemently opposed to the adoption of a literary career by women. The princess possessed great beauty and much personal charm. She died in 1845.

Antoine Vincent Arnault, one of the most distinguished men of the literary period of the empire, was born at Paris in 1766 and died in 1836. He remained faithful to Napoleon Bonaparte after the emperor's fall, and was, for a time, in exile.

Charles Dovalle was born in 1807 and was

educated for the bar. He, however, preferred a literary career and became a poet and journalist, writing for the *Figaro* and other newspapers. In 1829 he offended, in an article, M. Mira, a Manager of the *Théâtre des Variétés*, and one of the best shots of the day. The quarrel resulted in a duel in which Dovalle was mortally wounded.

Pierre Jean Béranger—1780 to 1857—the most famous of French chansonniers, has been called “The Robert Burns of France.” Among many other fine qualities his songs are marked by an exalted sense of patriotism.

Frédéric Bérat, was born in 1800 at Rouen in Normandy. His chansons are, in spirit, much akin to those of Béranger (whose personal friend he became), and are among the most charming in French literature. Bérat seems to be very little known in England, and not much read in France. The British Museum library has no copy of his works, and, even in Paris, the book is rare and costly.

Joseph Alexandre, Vicomte de Ségur, was born in 1756 and died at Bagnères in 1805. He wrote novels, plays, and some lively and witty songs of which “Time and Love” is perhaps the best. I regret that it is impossible to reproduce in English the word play of its refrain. Ségur

seems to have possessed a personal charm that was very fascinating, especially to women. He thoroughly understood the sex which whom he was, consequently, a great favourite.

Caroline Ruchet, afterwards Madame Olivier, was born in 1813 at Aigle, in Switzerland. In addition to her poems she wrote various essays and prepared an anthology of French sacred songs, which was published at Lausanne about 1844. Her religious verse shows intense and very genuine feeling. Her husband, Juste Daniel Olivier, in one of whose works, "*Poésies Lontaines*," some of his wife's poems are included, was a well known Swiss poet.

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Lontaines

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